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# REDISCOVERING INDIA

## **ABODE OF GODS :** **UTTARAKHAND**

**SHAH G.**

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*To the Memory of those who have laid their lives on the  
heights of Himalayas and left a trial to be treaded  
by those who walk on the sands of time.*

Shripati Misra  
Chief Minister  
Uttar Pradesh.

Vidhan Bhawan,  
Lucknow.

## FOREWORD

Himalayas have evoked wonder, praise and veneration. According to scriptures, "Himalaya is the king of mountains, five and three thousand leagues in extent at the circumference, the source of nearly five hundred rivers, the dwelling place of the pantheon of Gods and Goddesses and enriched with hundreds of magical drugs, is seen to rise aloft, like a cloud, the centre (of the earth)" —that is Himalaya, truly the abode of Gods. In fact, Himalayas have occupied a place of pride in our scriptures, literature and our culture and form an integral part of our life.

Even though man has moved far into space and depths of ocean but there is still much more for him to explore nearer home. It is this quest for the unseen, difficult and unclimbable, the sense of adventure it provides, that man seeks the heaven of the mountains. I am glad that Giriraj Shah has brought out this travelogue, the second in the series, after the publication of his book 'The Kingdom of the Gods—Uttarakhand.'

Uttarakhand is situated as the Crest-Jewel amidst Himalayas. It is the source of the Ganga and the Yamuna which nourish the plains of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal and ultimately merge and mingle in the ocean. Uttarakhand also houses the holy dhams of Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri and Yamunotri which are visited by pilgrims from different parts of India, braving incalculable hazards. Now with the passage of time, these pilgrims are joined by a new clan of tourists known as trekkers and mountaineers who seek the unseen and unclimbable.

I am deeply concerned with the preservation of Himalaya which can be achieved only through the involvement of the people in Government efforts to that direction. I hope the readers of this book will find sufficient material of abiding interest to attract them to the places which Mr. Shah has so vividly described in lucid style.

SHRIPATI MISRA



## PREFACE

Himalayas have attracted the attention of all, particularly of those who seek to see 'the true, the good and the beautiful'. This instinctive urge is fully reflected in the writings of ancient Indian sages who valiantly treading the unclimbable and treacherous treks in search of the incomprehensible being the creator and destroyer of the world. Probably this alone inspired the system of pilgrimage to the sanctum sonctorum the kingdom of Gods. That is why the Holy Dhams of Kedarnath, Badrinath, Yamunotri and Gangotri are located here where Gods are said to dwell and today these holy places are visited by teemi g millions, year in and year after.

The celebrated lake of Hemkund-lokpal is also located in this part of the Uttarakhand here where once Lakshman and Guru Govind are said to have meditated in one of their previous births. Today devoted Sikhs and locals, Yatris from different parts of the country, and tourists come here to have a holy dip in the lake and have a darshan of the Lakshman temple and Gurudwara.

As the summer approaches, pilgrims, tourists, trekkers and mountaineers start pouring in pursuit of having a vision of the bounteous beauty of the Himalayas but many of them are not able to enjoy their sojourn due to lack of knowledge and information about the route, geography, climatic conditions, Flora, culture and civilisation of the people. This dearth of information, particularly about the central Himalayas has always irked me and inspired to write about trekking in Uttarakhand from time to time and towards this end was intended the publication of my other books.

This urge to lay bare the hidden, strange and baffling features of the Uttarakhand was given further vent and culminated with

the writing of a book in 1975 entitled "KINGDOM OF GODS : UTTARAKHAND". The book was well received, hence this book in the series.

I am grateful to the Director Information, U.P., Sri Thakur Prasad Singh, Sri B.L. Shah, 'Mamaji' and Pradeep Kumar for excellent photographic illustrations.

The inspiration to write this travelogue came from *Cosmo Publications* who not only evinced keen interest in the project but have kindly undertaken to publish it well in time in the best available format.

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## **ERRATA**

On page 18 headline is Sanctum Sanctorum

On page 73 heading is Rawal not Rawali

On page 86 headline is Jadh Ganga not Todh Ganga

On page 114, line 3 read the first word as Nestung





## THE LURE OF MOUNTAINS

The scenic beauty of the Himalayas presents a panorama of infinite variety when viewed from different places, time and season of the year. The viewer never loses sight of the ever changing panorama with its thickly wooded mountains, dark blue ranges, one piled over another and in the background of the landscape of majestic snowy peaks, each rising higher than the other, behind the morning mist or when gradually evening falls and fades into dark after having shed golden light. Down below the hills, we have the grand panorama of green fields and woods encircled by silvery streams, and at night the fierce flare of the jungle fire illuminating the surrounding areas. Grander still is the moonlit night which makes the leaves of forest trees quiver with delight and makes the peaks spark with silvery shine in the background of the ajure sky, the rivers reflect the silvery moonlit reflection. The burst of the monsoon creates mixed reaction in the mind of the locals and visitors and when the water-laden clouds burst over mountain barriers and quench the thirst of the valley setting every stream and rivulet into spate which in turn floods the rivers with so much mud and silt that they roar down the gorges sweeping everything which falls in their way. Still more captivating is

the sight of rolling mists of enveloping valleys in a pall of vapour. This land of fact and fables has been described as the abode of Gods and Goddesses; in fact what Palestine is to the Christian and Mecca to a Muslim, likewise Uttarakhand is to a Hindu—the home of the great Gods which hold the way to final liberation.

There may be dozens of reasons why people come to the Himalayas, since time immemorial but the most appropriate seems, as a guide said, that he is fully alive on the mountains. Others do it because they want to escape from society either in search of spiritual longings or for their sheer fascination for solitude. Some take to trekking and mountaineering to test their physical endurance and to be free and breathe fresh air. Companionship is a strong motivation too, because the pilgrims, tourists, trekkers and even mountaineers stay in close touch and this chance for lasting friendship lifts climbing above other sports because society tends to make human relationships superficial, mountaineering deepens them since ‘shared adversity has a lot to do.’ Another reason is that human material for climbing attracts substantial men. In fact, there is a clique of super climbers who starve for new vistas of vision, strange people and new peaks, seeking unclimbable and for this purpose spend nights roped together on sheer wall bivouaces or snug in a bed roll under constant discomfort of falling ice and snow on the high Himalayas. Indeed this is a different breed of visitors to the Himalayas.

The trekker meets through his mind’s eye new civilizations, inhabited by strange people who practice different trades and indulge in uncommon traits of socio-economic behaviour. The entire phenomenon is baffling. The desire to see strange cultures holds irresistible attraction.

### **Trekking as a sport**

Like all other sports, trekking is a safe sport, provided you are well equipped and know what you are doing. It strips character to the bones. A few minutes in a camp or on a rock can tell you more about a man’s character than five consecutive cocktail parties or continued sessions of gay games in a disco. On a ledge, no one can fake anything. Words hardly

count here. Cowardice shows quickest. Besides will power, good physique also has a lot to do with trekking and fortunately if you are so, your mind becomes gurgling fountain of ideas. Probably this factor alone led the Gods and Goddesses to dwell here. Our ancestors were also never tired of visiting these places by the same urge of discovering the real and ultimate.

On the mountains, you find answer of all problems; in fact, each upward step seems to bring you closer to a solution, gratefully, you keep in moving, and next moment aesthetic experience takes hold of you. Knowledge seems to break instantaneously. This fact is very well illustrated from the life and deeds of Sankaracharya, Swami Vivekananda, Ravindranath Tegore, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Nicholus Roerick, Udai Shanker and many other known and unknown luminaries who either craved for this experience visited, or have lived in this part of the Himalayas which has been described by Kalidasa—

In the north lieth  
The king of mountains—Himalaya  
The stirring rod of the world  
The divine king of mountains.

### The lure

During my extensive stay in the Uttarakhand, I have observed that the same mountain is different each day with subtle changes and each trip a different experience. You drink the water which never tasted so sweet, and any food digests well. As the climber's hands reach out, they march in a silent, rhythmic and joint step after having covered tiresome motor journey. The process continues, at the foot of the hills where a river must be crossed on a log serving as a bridge. After some route march, at the end of approach march, where trees end and rocks start, ropes bind the climbers who shake hands before rock climbing commences. A little further lies a sheer wall which the leader climbs and stands on a ledge, giving smiles of encouragement to the co-climbers. A little higher, above the ledge, everything becomes intensified—the sun is fiercer, the rocks dizzying and wind blowing but the views are

stunning.

You stand on the very parapet of heaven.

Trekking, and for that reason even rock-climbing and mountaineering require only basic commonsense and courage of conviction. An alert man with basic commonsense can go anywhere since climbing of mountains and trekking in the interiors of Himalayas is basically an adventure wedded to hard work, patient organisation, continued experience and unwavering devotion to an end such as is not the exclusive possession of a specialised group of experts, because in fact, in the words of Geoffrey Bruce "it can be found gosping and defiant on the heights of Everest and in the whistling of two Sunday companions."

Whistle your way to mountains.

## WHY UTTARAKHAND

The number of travellers who are never tired of visiting known places and peaks and meeting familiar faces of people and yet seek the unclimbable, is increasing year after year. People who want to know places and learn unknown things about the known places is true about the Uttarakhand.

Uttarakhand has unique things to offer to the visitor in terms of its excellent scenic beauty, marvellous sceneries of ancient arts and architecture, flower laden valleys, luxuriant meadows, emerald green lakes, simple people, folk tales and folk songs of highland people, glaciers and source of life giving Ganga and Yamuna, the celebrated saints of Satyuga and the hippies of Kaliyuga. There is so much of everything that you only need to come once.

### **The journey to Uttarakhand**

The traveller whose destination is the mountain province of Uttarakhand must first of all make his way up to the railway terminals of Kathgodam if proceeding towards Kumaon hills and Rishikesh if his destination is Garhwal. The other important railway stations are Tanakpur, Haldwani, Ramnagar, Haridwar, and Dehradun. The railway line passes through a

flourishing agricultural country of Tarai with their usual scenery of wide stretches of unfenced fields and land waste diversified here and there with clumps of trees and cluster of mud villages. The Tarai or the "fresh greenery" as the name implies, is properly the belt of grassy swamp which has been turned into rich fertile agricultural land. It owes its origin to the marshy nature of the ground from which sluggish streams ooze and flow lazily or stand in stagnant pools. Tall reeds and grasses, higher than a man on horseback once used to cover the soil, the remnants of which are still found occasionally at some places. At the foot of the hills, thick jungle encircles the Himalayan range, extending several hundred miles between Garhwal, Kumaon and Nepal.

After crossing the Tarai, we enter the forest belt called the Bhabar, which has formed part of Kumaon and Garhwal kingdom from earliest times, and immediately skirts the mountains. The Tarai forests are clearly visible, now, presenting a massive wall of forest clad slopes and heights rising steeply from the vast plain which we have been traversing so long. We now pass through a thick tropical jungle, in which the sal trees figure largely. The water courses have entirely disappeared. There are no pools.

After a rather tedious travel through north-eastern Railway systems or through roadways with stoppages at small sleepy stations, we reach Kathgodam or Rishikesh preceded by Haldwani or Haridwar in either cases. Here is the terminus of the last railway station from where the tourists board buses or hire taxis for their onward destination.

### **Climbing the heights**

So much has changed in Kumaon and Garhwal but the buses of KMOU Ltd., G.M. O.U. Ltd., the T.G.M.O.U. Ltd., have not changed. Still they look like the wooden boxes with their rickety structure and most uncomfortable seats. The tourists or pilgrims are stuffed like luggage or sheeps, one over the other. The bus starts, with a jerk, leaving a trail of burnt diesel.

As the bus climbs up, after leaving Kathgodam or Rishikesh or Tanakpur or for that reason Ramnagar or Dehradun, while

ascending the winding roads when we turn our head from the windows and look outside, we see the great hazy plain below stretching as far as the eye can reach, its greenery intersected by the white line of one or two wide river channels. The journey by the latter route is one of endless variety and charm. At one time the traveller surmounts passes of great height, at another time winds along dark gorges, with occasional views of the great peaks, their silvery glory, bright against the deep blue heavens, amply repaying him for the toil of the way. The richest vegetation is always to be found between the heights of 6000 and 10000 ft. In autumn the ground is covered in many places with flowering plants like white anemone, columbine, and a kind of strawberry of delicious flavour that grows in great abundance, as well as the common fragrance indicating resembling a raspberry.

In rainy season the bus journey is very troublesome; therefore, no trekker should hazard a journey into Himalayas between June and September. Most of the bus accidents do take place at that time of the year.

The vehicular journey's end is normally at the end of the day-long ride over the shrieking buses which appear and disappear at each bend. The tired traveller encounters the coolies, porters and travel agents who take care of you till you arrive at your lodging place.

### **The tourist rest houses**

Europeans were great trekkers, keen lovers of nature and very particular about the places of their stay. Entire Uttarakhand is studded with beautiful inspection houses at scenic places. To these old inspection houses, today hordes of tourist rest houses of the Tourism Department and tourist lodges of the Kumaon and Garhwal Mandal have been added besides the ever increasing number of hotels and other forms of accommodation. You only need to know about them in advance or consult those who have gone earlier. Always try to get prior reservation. Once lodged safely in a comfortable place you can operate suitably on your jaunts of trekking.

Most of the rest houses provide bedding. This can help you economise on your burden of loads.

### **Coolies, ponies and jhaboos**

For journey to distant places, foot journey is to be undertaken for which luggage in the high Himalayas has to be carried on backs of hired coolies, ponies or jhaboos which forms an inseparable part of Uttarakhand scene. Excessive baggage in the hill is like baggage to the army in war.

Sturdy ponies are also available at the starting point of the journey at a fixed price for the varying distances of places in the hill country. The pony as a ride is an excellent animal, very sure-footed and by far the most suitable carrier in the hills.

Amongst the coolies available, one class of coolie is Dotiyal, hailing from Doti on the eastern side of Nepal. He is one of the sturdiest carrier of loads who carries the load on his back, supported by a rope passing round his forehead. The strength and endurance of these men are marvellous. If you give Biris and offer occasional tea to the porter he is your best friend. It is always better to settle rates with them and in cases of doubt consult the local Tehsildar or the Sub-Divisional Magistrate. In case of large parties on long trekking routes or mountaineering expedition, the District Magistrate of the concerned district can be helpful. Large trekking parties always consult them.

### **The pleasure of foot journey**

I have done hundreds of miles of journey, through all possible modes of transportation but the best has been foot journey. Foot journey is pleasant because of delicious cool breezes are encountered on the slopes and as one rises higher and higher a feeling of exhilaration possesses the mind, the lungs are filled with pure, sweet air and a sense of liberation is felt, after the dead land of the Indian plain is crossed. Down below us, as we ascend up and up the zigzag road, the deep gorges filled with sub-tropical growth and above us the high clad peaks with pine and deodar filled forests present surprise of the unexpected.

While walking on foot, the trekker quite frequently sees the sight of a family with a woman seated on a jhaboo or pony, usually over household stuff; chubby infants are also

## *Uttarakhand*

seen tied up and supported on the luggage animals, or seated astride of their father or mother's side as the latter walk along. Another amusing sight sometimes met with is that of a baby few days old carried in a basket at the mother's back.

When walking on foot, it is always advisable to walk in the early hours of the morning and it is at this hour when we can see the glimpse of snow-capped peaks particularly between the months of September and March. Number of times, I have seen such scenes but the most unforgettable has been that of Panchachuli peak, which I witnessed from Chyribagarh in November 1968. I witnessed one of the white pinnacled ridges of Panchachuli soaring upwards from the shadows of the dark gorges at their feet—a glory of delicate sunset red light shown in delicate shade and red colour against the background of ajure sky.

The pleasures of foot journey are immense because after a suitable pause of walking over rock precipices, we descend for some miles through thick shady forest where in winter the snow lies in the path, and even in summer the air feels cool and wet. Such forests as this are still there.

In a few places one still sees the “jhula” or rope bridge, though these have been now much improved. Two strong ropes of twisted grass are stretched across from cliff, and to these are attached shorter ropes supporting transverse piece of wood, while over the latter are laid lengths of split bamboo, upon which the passenger has to walk. The rack or foot way is only about ten to twelve inches wide and the whole bridge swings about in an alarming fashion. Another type of bridge consists of few fire logs thrown over the small chasms. These adventurous crossings are unforgettable.

The memorable events of trekking have been best described by Jim Corbett who writes “Times, there will be, a many, when gasping for breath, you toil up the face of steep mountains on feet torn and bleeding by passage over rough rocks, sharp shale, and frozen ground, when you will question whether the prospective reward you seek is worth the present price you pay in suffering, but being a good Hindu you will toil on comforting yourself with the thought that merit is not gained without suffering, and greater the suffering in this world, the

greater the reward in the next.”<sup>1</sup>

This alone makes me to leave my home and go to the hill, year after year, a pursuit which can be best put in the words of Aurobindo:

With the wind and weather  
beating around me  
Up to the hill and moorland  
I go,  
who will climb with me  
Wade through the brooke  
and tramp through the snow.

---

1. Jim Corbett, *Man Eating Leopard of Rudraprayag*, p. 3.



## REMEMBER—IF YOU ARE GOING TO THE HILLS

Trekking is more than an individual visit to a distant place. It is a team work where living, acting and thinking together is involved with a fraternity of like-minded people who seek high adventure in high places, considering that courage lies in adventure.

Today trekking has become a popular sport which is specialised with the use of artificial aids to accomplish ascent that would otherwise be impossible. The practice has become so widespread and so developed that it may be said to constitute a new and separate phase of human endeavour in the field of trekking and mountain craft.

### **Equipment**

In the good old days walking stick, rope, ice axe and improvised boots constituted part of a mountaineer's equipment. Those early trekkers braved the hazards of trekking with improvised equipment. After continued trekking, fresh experience, incessant experimentation and prolonged research has brought forth a variety of new instruments and sophisticated appliances amongst which most important are pitons and carabiners. The former is a horizontal or vertical iron or steel

pike which is hammered in to tiny cracks in the rock to afford support to hand, foot or rope, the latter is a snap ring which when attached to a piton, rope or sling helps the mountaineer to make ingenious manipulation on the rope. Rope forms an important part of a mountaineer's equipment with which two major manoeuvres belay a stance allowing you to protect and pull other climbers by tying up four or six persons in a rope and secondly rappel which permits you to get down quickly through bodily articulation. Rope also provides protection for the porters who move up and down with heavy loads. Ropes are differentiated as climbing and manila rope.

Aluminium ladder has also come in use for climbing, crossing crevasses and negotiating rivers.

#### **Requisites for trekking**

Initial trekking and subsequent climbing demands good health and a measure of aptitude, strength, agility, endurance, co-ordination of the body, soul and of the nerves, and a certain amount of the technical knowledge derived from experience. One should ensure following before embarking on any trekking, climbing or mountaineering venture:

*Reconnaissance* : The leader must collect all information data about the area of climb. It is well to bear in mind Mallory's remark, "Reconnaissance, reconnoitre, reconnoître" and besides reconnaissance one can always take advantage of previous experience because final victories belong not only to those who climb the peaks but also to those who went before.

*Members of the party* : Companionship i.e. esprit-de-corps, is one of the strange motivations for mountaineering since shared adversity has a lot to do. The members of the party should be selected after careful examination of their past performance and climbing experience.

*Health* : An alert man with good physique can go anywhere since he knows the struggle of the heart, lung and limb on the long upward pull and the sharp, sudden thrill of negotiating a cliff or cornice and after day's hard work snug in a bed roll or sleeping bag under constant discomfort of falling snow and wind.

*Weather:* Every member of the team must undergo a period of gradual acclimatisation before the organs can operate and get adjusted at height. It has been found that if one spends too long time in rarified atmosphere serious bodily deterioration sets in which may result in sleeplessness, vomiting and loss of appetite.

*Equipment :* All equipment and clothing must be collected and arranged before starting for a trek or expedition. It should be both best in type and condition, particularly the mountaineering equipment has to be best.

*Leadership:* Last but not least, comes the question of leadership because in his hands depends the fate of the party. A leader is not one who has climbed the highest point but is one who succeeds in placing the maximum number of men on top. Achieving this is no ordinary job since it requires good organisation, coordination, administrative arrangements and the highest order of proficiency in rock and snow craft.

### Hazards of mountaineering

Accidents do take place in trekking, climbing and mountaineering due to over-ambition, climbing above, pushing in bad weather and lack of experience. For climbing the Himalayas, the obstacles of rock, ice, snow, precipice, avalanche, inaccessible wilderness, physical endurance, elaborate, arrangements of supply, transport and communication and above all weather are to be faced. Monsoon is perhaps the most treacherous and relentless enemy which the Himalayan trekkers have to face every year from June to August which turn heights into vast death traps of melting and crumbling ice and snow; therefore, it is necessary that every trekking party setting out on an Himalayan adventure must keep in mind.

*High altitude sickness:* Trekking and expedition parties pay little attention to acclimatisation and in their haste to trek the desired place of climb or the peak rapidly go up and run through the mountains which results in high altitude sickness due to lack of proper acclimatisation, the climbers find themselves gripped with sleeplessness and giddiness. Most unpredictable are the mental reactions of

men transplanted from their natural low land habitat to the bitter, almost airless heights of the substratesphere, where sleeplessness takes place, perception becomes dulled, judgement faulty, emotion unstable, due to giddiness, will atrophied and sometimes due to continued vomiting, extinction itself seems preferable to the next gasping and stumbling step. To avoid all this proper acclimatisation must be done with the suitable stopovers after every 2000 or 3000 feet of trekking.

*Weather.* Over-enthusiastic mountaineers keep on pushing inspite of deteriorating weather which ultimately results in devastating catastrophes.

*Smoking and drinking.* Smoking is dangerous on the mountains, because it requires extra breathing effort on the part of smoker at a time when lungs require maximum rest. Drinking affects the circulation of blood and the intake of oxygen increases, thereby causing breathlessness at higher altitudes. Drinking on the mountains is hazardous since it impairs judgement and burns physical reserves of energy on which we may have to call at any time.

*Ice and snow hazard.* Except moraines other glacial phenomenon presents, varied and complex problems, including long and tiring walk over unending and slippery glacier underneath which are hidden deep crevices and from the sides hang huge ice falls and seracs which keep hurtling loose stones and bombarding the area with heavy stones and ice pieces which fly like projectiles and missiles hitting the unwary with bullet like ferocity. Most treacherous of all is the impending threat of falling avalanches which roar down with tons of ice and snow enveloping everything on its way and hitting the ignorant and unwary.

*Frostbite :* Frostbite is temporary or permanent freezing of limbs which may result in permanent incapacity due to sudden exposure or lack of precautions. Limbs must be saved from compression and lack of oxygen. Rapid rewarming by luke-warm water and warm clothing also helps. Never rub petrol or kerosene oil.

*Dehydration :* It is due to shortage of liquid intake and by excessive breathing which causes reduction of bodily

reserves of moisture which causes swelling of the face and body. More intake of liquid food, hot tea and other beverages is recommended.

*Chilbilinis.* This is caused by extreme cold and results in parts of the body becoming red with severe irritation which later on turn blue and become awfully painful. Fomentation with warm water helps to remove it.

*Trenchfoot.* This is caused by prolonged exposure to wind and cold combined with the damp footwears which stagnates blood circulation, due to lack of movements. As it deteriorates it turns into chilbilinis and not properly attended to, it may lead to permanent loss of that part of the body. Lukewarm water treatment and warm clothing coverage is advisable.

*Sunburn.* It happens due to reflection of ultraviolet rays from the snow and the affected parts are mostly chin, ear lobes, optum and eyes which may be affected by snow blindness. Wearing of snow glasses and use of lip saliva or vaseline is suggested.

*Pulmonary oedema.* Pulmonary oedema takes place due to poor acclimatisation or exposure of body to severe cold which results in mild cough, pain, sore throat and body ache. As the case deteriorates, due to lack of timely aid, patient fights for oxygen. In such cases, immediate removal to lower altitudes is advisable and for temporary relief treatment of and pedermycine aspirin alongwith oxygen is advisable.

These are some of the basic hazards which a trekker has to encounter; others come by lack of experience. Therefore continued efforts should be maintained to streamline the arrangements on foolproof basis.

As such, the technique and craft of trekking can be summed up as an adventure wedded to hard work, patient organisation, experiment and above all unwavering devotion to an end which lifts it above other sports.



## THE STORY OF PILGRIMAGE

Why people come to the Himalayas ? What moves them to be there ? These are some of the questions which are raised by the inquisitive pilgrims, trekkers and avowed mountaineers. To my mind, there are two reasons : firstly to see the unseen, breath fresh air and be finally free, and secondly, to pay homage to the Gods and Goddesses who are supposed to dwell over the unapproachable and inaccessible snow-capped summits which when viewed from a distance inspire devotion and reverence. These men who want to see the unseen and are constantly in search of the true, the good and always seek the unclimbable, Himalayas hold irresistible charm for them. The *svarga* or heaven of the Hindus has been located here and in fact, probably this search for the heaven inspired the Pandavas to proceed on "Maha-Prasthan" interesting details about which are available in the epical poem of *Mahabharata*. Every year, scores of pilgrims still try to find the traces of this great pilgrimage.

Ved Vyasa, the composer of *Mahabharata* lived at Mana. He surveyed the entire Uttarakhand either physically or scanned the interiors of Himalaya through his mystic power, the minutest details about which have been given in the *Skandpu-*

rana which divides Himalayas in five parts out of which Uttarakhand has been described as a country of 'Kedarkhand' and 'Manas Kband.' The contemporary name of all the peaks, glaciers, rivers and places are derived from this monumental work of great antiquity.

The Buddhist missionaries were the first trekkers who voyaged into far and distant lands defying the airless, dreary and desolate heights. After crossing high Himalayas and traversing the great mountain barriers they reached Tibet and from there moved on to Mongolia, China and Central Asia. In fact, it was Buddhism which brought Huen-Tsang, Itsing and Fa-Hien to India unmindful of the risks which were involved. They travelled hundreds of miles to witness the magnificence of the land where once Buddha dwelled and delivered the gospel of truth Dhammachakra Pavattanasutta or the wheel of law.

Indian classical Sanskrit literature is full of the episodes from the lives of the pioneers who lived and meditated upon the heights of Himalayas.

### **The Sanctim-Sancterus**

In the Hindu mythology, the name of Jagadguru Sankaracharya ranks very high because of his lasting contribution of evolving the system of four Dhams—Kedarnath, Badrinath Dwarka and Jagannath. Sankaracharya strode through the rocky terrain of Uttarakhand and established the famed dhams of Kedarnath and Badrinath and the tirathas of Yamunotri and Gangotri. He became Jagat Guru by constant striving. Eversince multitudes of people flock to these distant places drawn by an insatiable desire to have a *darshan* of the Gods and Goddesses defying the vagaries of nature. This and other factors have played significant role in making trekking a part of human life in the form of pilgrimage.

### **Early beginnings of trekking as a sport in India**

Trekking untenanted lands without religious sanctity was not acceptable to Indian thinking. They have lived and believed in pilgrimage. The modern concept of trekking and mountaineering came to India with the Britishers who were pioneers in the survey work. They brought science at the service of man-

kind. The earliest inquisitive trekker was Moorecraft who investigated the interiors of Karakoram as far back as 1820. Ever-since, multitudes of surveyors, geographers, geologists, trekkers and mountaineers have continued to find out the secrets of the high and holy Himalayas. In these early efforts the role played by Pd. Kishan Singh and Nain Singh of Millam is significant for their fantastic discoveries of the unknown lands.

Modern mountaineering traces its origin from Lloyd and Gerard of the survey department who climbed Leo Pargyal in Himachal Himalayas while surveying the neighbouring vicinity. In the central Himalayas which is also known as Uttarakhand, the pioneers were Capt. Herbert, Hodgson, Capt. R. Stratchey, Capt. H. Stratchey and Dr. T. Thompson. After their pioneering efforts, numerous other peaks were scaled by the survey parties with the help of crude and improvised mountaineering equipment. Thus by 1850, the height of most of the peaks had been trigonometrically determined. The finest hour in the field of early mountaineering came when a party of surveyors climbed 23000 ft. Schilla peak. This success established a climbing record in those days when men hardly knew anything about air pressure, lack of oxygen and living conditions on such airless heights.

#### **The stirring rod of the earth**

In the year 1852, the highest peak of the world was discovered by an Indian named Radanath Sircar, the chief computer of the survey department. He was following up the results of the measurements collected by the department. One day, during such check up, he found that the peak No.15 stood up not only as the highest amongst the Himalayan peaks but as the highest peak of the world. This was a startling discovery. He ran out and burst into the office of Sir Audreen Waugh and exclaimed "Sir, we have found the greatest mountain in the world. It is peak No. 15. It is 290,28 ft. high." Yes, it was the highest peak of the world. It was named Mt. Everest by the survey department after the name of Sir George Everest. However, this peak was not unknown to the locals because they called it "Sagarmatha" in Nepalese, Gauri-Shankar by

mother of the earth' to the Tibetans. Eversince this new found discovery, this peak has always stirred the imagination of daring mountaineers who seek high adventure in high places.

### **Age of mountaineering**

The first organised expedition to the Himalayas was launched under the leadership of W.H. Graham. He made a number of successful attempts in Sikkim and ultimately succeeded in climbing 24000 ft. high Kabru, which lay in the neighbourhood of Kanchenjunga. In 1882, Sir William Conway headed an expedition to Karakoram. At the same time, Douglas Freshfield made a difficult and adventurous circuit of Kanchenjunga and the indenitable Munnery was still exploring approaches to Nanga Parvat. The most fantastic feat of early mountaineering was appearance of an American couple Dr. and Ms. William Hunt Workman who led six expeditions between 1909-1912 and succeeded in climbing pyramid peak at the age of fifty-six which itself is a record. In subsequent years, Dr. Kallas and Dr. T. G. Longstaff succeeded in climbing 23060 ft. Trisul peak. By now, most of the important peaks had been climbed.

### **Sherpas, the spiders of Himalayas**

At this stage, induction of a local element known as sherpas was a significant landmark in the history of Indian mountaineering. It proved a significant introduction because in the years to come they were destined to play an important role in all the mountaineering expeditions.

Sherpas are the natives of Himalayas who were initially hired by the expedition parties as coolies but with the passage of time, as they gained experience, began to take part in more advanced mountaineering activities and soon established themselves as an indispensable institution.

### **Everest expedition**

In 1922 Mt. Everest climbing expedition was led by Brigadier Charls G. Bruce and included such eminent mountaineers as Col. E. L. Strutt and Dr. T.G. Longstaff. Oxygen was used for the first time in this expedition. Earlier in 1921, Howard,

Bury, Mallory and Bullocks, had attempted Everest successively but failed. In 1930 Jonksong peak (24340 ft.) which lies between Sikkim and Nepal was climbed by Prof. Gunther Dyren Furth. In 1931 Frank S. Smythe and Eric Shipton won their way atop Kamet (25441 ft) in Garhwal Himalayas. They discovered a valley which had rare flowers in abundance and named it as the valley of flowers. In the year 1933 aerial reconnaissance was introduced in the field of mountaineering when two adventure loving flying officers named Marquis of Douglas, Glydesdale and Flt. ft. MacIntyre flew at a height of over 33000 ft and had a close view of the ultimate height of the world. Gunther's wife won recognition in 1934 when she climbed Queen Mary in Karakoram.

Some fifty miles southeast of Kamet stands Nanda Devi (25645 ft.) which has always held irresistible lure for men with courage and conviction. Eric Shipton climbed and surveyed the neighbouring area of Nanda Devi sanctuary in the year 1934 and again in the year 1936. Another batch of climbers set out to climb it and claim to have climbed it. Probably, this was the last climb before the war started except with the exception of Arnold Heims and August Gausse's Swiss team which climbed some places in central Himalayas and while war was on the Poles marched on an expedition over Nanda Devi but failed.

Second world war eclipsed mountaineering activities for full five years but no sooner the war was over, the tents were again pitched and the great caravan of mountaineers was once more on the march. In 1947 Andre Roche's Swiss party made a number of successful ascents in the Garhwal Himalayas. In the year 1950, the French climbed Annapurna (26493 ft) peak. In 1951, yet another unsuccessful attempt was made on the Nanda Devi. But the finest hour in the history of human endeavour to climb the unclimbable came on May 29, 1953 when Sri Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norkay stood on top of the world. The year 1953 brought yet another significant success when Willy Merkel memorial expedition succeeded in placing Dr. Herrmann Buhl on top of Nanga Parbat which had been defying the Germans hitherto. Karakoram 2 was climbed by the Italians in 1954 and in 1955 British climber ascended the divine height of Kanchenjunga.

In all these expeditions, Indian mountaineers like Tenzing Norkay, Gurdyal Singh and Nandu Jayal had started playing significant role.

### **Advent of Indian mountaineering**

While foreign expeditions continued to probe the secrets and mysteries of high Himalayas, few daring Indians kept on pursuing their desired ambitions through dedicated endeavours. Amongst such early enthusiasts were Gurdyal Singh, Tenzing and Nandu Jayal. In fact mountaineering had come to be recognised as an established and adventurous sport. Keeping in view the interest by the Indian youths, the Government of India opened a mountaineering institute at Darjeeling in 1954 at the instance of the then Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru who had great love for the mountains. He became its founder President, Dr. B. C. Roy, the then chief minister of West Bengal, Vice President and H. C. Sarin, its Secretary. In order to systematise, organise and streamline mountaineering as a sport, Indian Mountaineering Foundation was established which has done yeomen service to the cause of mountaineering eversince its birth in following manner :

- (i) Aid, guide and advice the mountaineering clubs.
- ii) Render technical advice to mountaineering expedition.
- iii) Provide financial assistance to Indian expeditions.
- iv) Issue on loan or hire at reasonable rates mountaineering stores to Indian expeditions through
  - (a) Juyal Memorial Stores, Darjeeling.
  - (b) Dias Memorial Stores, Uttarkashi.
  - (c) Bahuguna Memorial Stores, Nainital.

The Indian Mountaineering Foundation has done remarkable service to the cause of mountaineering, eversince its inception by liberally sanctioning grants to mountaineering expedition and giving training fees to young boys and girls who cannot afford it. It has also organised training camps for selected mountaineers and has sponsored both Indian and the first ever expedition with foreign mountaineers to difficult and unscaled peaks. The most prestigious expedition organised in 1959 by the Indian Mountaineering Foundation was under the leader-

ship of Comdr. M. S. Kohli and K. P. Sharma who climbed 22510 ft. Nandakhat. In the same year, Gunner climbed Bander Poonch (20456 ft) and Capt. (now Colonel) N. Kuwar climbed Neelkanth (21640 ft.). Thus in the post-independence era, mountaineering came of age and during this period Uttarakhand became centre of active mountaineering activity.

In the year 1960, the French climbed Annapurna I (26041 ft.) and Annapurna II (24688 ft.) was climbed by the Germans and Britishers. The first all Indian expedition was launched in the summer of 1960 under Brig. Gyan Singh which unfortunately narrowly missed the peak. However, Chinese claim to have climbed it from the Tibet side. The second party was sent in 1962 under John Dias which again failed to scale the peak. In the year 1963, the Americans successfully hoisted their flag on top of the Everest. They were followed by the Indians, the Swiss and the Japanese who pinned their national flags on the ultimate height of the earth.

### **Mountaineering in Uttarakhand**

A befitting tribute was paid to the land and people of Uttarakhand in the year 1964 when the government of Uttar Pradesh and the Indian Mountaineering Foundation decided to establish a mountaineering institute at Uttarkashi and name it after Jawahar Lal Nehru as Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, Uttarkashi. At the same time, the Manali Institute of Mountaineering was opened by the Himachal Pradesh Government. These Institutes opened vast area of activity which ultimately led to the opening of numerous other institutions. viz, the National Mountaineering Club, Nainital Dutugar Mountaineering Club, Calcutta, Himalayan Enjoyers Association, Chittaranjan, Mountaineering Institute, Mt. Abu and Maharashtra Mountaineering Club, Bombay. These pioneering clubs are doing remarkable service to the cause of mountaineering by instilling an instinct of adventure amongst the young boys and girls who wish to see the unseen and climb the unclimbable.

### **The call of the mountains**

I had my own share of humble contribution to make in the

field of the trekking by virtue of my inborn inclination towards the breath-taking beauty of the mountains and the challenges posed by the stunning views of sky rocketing heights. In the year 1967, I did my basic mountaineering course from the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, Uttarkashi under the guidance of Brig. Gyan Singh and in the year of 1968, I climbed Bhagirathi II (21365 ft.) while undergoing advance course at the Institute. After this, I had an extensive opportunity of trekking in the interiors of Uttarakhand.

I have given in brief the story of human endeavour to climb the mountains because it calls for a spirit of adventure and seek the difficult. My purport is to acquaint my readers about the what and why behind the spirit of adventure. I hope this will fire many a youngmen to leave their homes and move up the mountains to see the unseen and seek the unclimbable.

## HIMALAYAS—THE DIVINE KING OF MOUNTAINS

Before I take you to the celebrated abode of the Gods and Goddesses, I would like to acquaint my readers with the basic structure of the Himalayan geography and geology so that they are able to enjoy and understand the Himalayas in a better way.

In Bhagvatgita, Lord Krishna describes himself as “Sthavar-anam Himalaya”, that is ‘among the mountains, I am Himalaya.’ Kalidasa has described Himalayas as ‘Devatma Himalayana m Nagadhiraj’ which dipping its eastern ridge in the ocean formed the spine and measuring rod of the earth. The name Himalaya has been derived from two Sanskrit words ‘hima’ and ‘alaya’ which mean the repository of snow. The ancient sages have showered immense praise on the beauty and majesty of the mountains and glorified it as the abode of Gods and determining factor for the history and culture of this part of the country. The Vedic Rishis have unceasingly sung about the beauty of the Himalayas. The epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* have described it as the kingdom of Gods. Puranas describe Himalayas as the stage for many of the historical incidents depicted therein. In the famed book *Skandpurana* there are two separate chapters entitled ‘Kedar-

khand" and 'Manaskhand' which describe the geographical features, history and passage of civilisation in this part of the country. In fact, Ved Vyasa has named almost each and every peak, river and valley with appalling accuracy, giving it an aura of religious sanctity. Buddhist literature also makes numerous references about the high peaks and passes which Buddhist missionaries often frequented during their extensive travels. Buddhaghosa, the famed Buddhist writer mentions that the Anottatta is situated in the vicinity of Kalashuti and other Himalayan peaks out of which flow four rivers viz. Simkamukha—the lion or east face, Asva Mukha—the horse or west face, the Hathimukha—the elephant or south face and Usvamukha—the bull or north face.

Truely, Sanskrit literature describes Himalayas as the home of Gods and Goddesses.

### **The geography**

Dr. D. N. Wadia has described the geography of Himalayas in these words : "The rise of the Himalayas from the floor of the ancient mediterranean sea is an epic of the geological history of Asia. This evolution was not accomplished in a single moment but the uplift was secular and periodic in at least three stages, beginning with the Eocene period of the tertiary era." Now it is a well known fact that the Himalayas gradually rose high and they are not continuous chain or range of mountains, instead a series of more or less parallel or converging ranges intersected by enormous valleys and extensive plateaus. A mountain range is fixed by the continuity and direction. No great physical boundary could be more marked than the base of the mountains between the Jhelam on the west and the Brahmaputra on the east, a distance of 1500 miles. Throughout its length, the Himalayas rise from alluvial plains. The chain of mountains in the north that forms our boundary with Tibet-China is in reality the southern face of the mountains, below which lie the plains of India. The loftiest summits are normally found towards the southern edge.

The Himalayas lie stretched uninterruptedly for over 2500 kilometers in length and 350 kilometers in breadth. They are the highest mountains in the world, yet they are the youngest

mountains because in prehistoric times what was sea bed suddenly came out on the surface as the longest and highest mountain range on earth where peaks crowd on peaks as far as eyes can see with a crumpled confusion of rock, snow and ice surrounded by deep gorges and valleys which have sheer drop of thousands feet thus making them unapproachable and inaccessible. At places, peaks have become so rugged and pointed due to continuous wind and avalanche that they pierce straight into the sky, particularly between the altitudes of 14000 ft. to 16000 ft. It seems as if they are in the process of fragmenting and gradually breaking down and I suppose (the geologists may agree) that a few centuries later, they may be reduced to gentle sloping hills and with the passage of time vegetation may grow on them. This gradual process can be seen in the Arwa valley and lower Millam valley of central Himalayas (Uttarakhand).

The Himalayas starting from Brahmaputra in the east stretch westward through Bhutan and Sikkim where snow peaks ranging from 20000 ft. to 25000 ft, soar into the sky shedding golden light when the sun sets behind them. Further towards west, along Sikkim and Nepal lie the fabled giants of mountaineering ranging from 20000 ft. to 29000 ft. including the tallest among the mountains, the Everest, locally known as Chomolungma, the mother Goddess of the earth. A little ahead lies the sacred most among the divine—"Kanchenjunga" and the awe-inspiring "Makalu" and further west, in the interior of Nepal lies "Dhaulagiri" or "Dhawalgiri" meaning sparkling white. A little ahead lies Mansa and the magnificent group of Annapurnas. The main range snails past Nepal and moves northward into the beautiful land of Kumaon and Garhwal which is known as Uttarakhand. Here lies the magnificent group of Nanda Devi, with its camel shaped 25645 ft. dome which is surrounded by a garland of Rishi Ganga on the three sides and Gori Ganga on the other side. These two rivers lie spread round the neck of Kumaon-Garhwal Himalayas and fall below the towering shoulders like the beautiful hairs of a lovely maiden. Such is the beauty of Himalayan peaks and rivers which I had occasion to visit and watch from different places at different time and season of the year. The other

famed peaks of Uttarakhand Himalayas, which I had an occasion to see at close range or climb the outskirts or ridges are Kamet, Trishul, Nanda-ghunti, Sudarshan, Shivling, Bandarpoomch, Pancha-chali, Chaukhamba, Neelkanth and Bhagirathi group of peaks. I had an opportunity of climbing Bhagirathi II (21,365 ft.) in 1968, a description about the climb been given elsewhere in the book.

From Garhwal, the Himalayas, bend a little northward taking in their stride Himachal Pradesh where lie the famed peaks of Leo Pargyal and Kinnar Kailash. From Himachal, the Himalayas stretch all along the Kashmir and end up at the end of Laddakh where the Pamirs, Hindukush and Himalayas meet and mingle. Here, at the end of the valley where the Pakistan border meets India's stands Nanga Parbat which culminates at the top into a dome in the sky. At the feet of the Nanga ends Himalayan range and starts Karakoram which houses the famed 2—the second highest peak of the world.

Thus lies stretched the 2500 km. long range of Himalayas which girdles Asia and tops India like a diadem crested with the finest jewels which attract men of courage and conviction who revel in deeds of adventure.

### **The Himalayan system**

Longitudinally, the Himalayan system consists of three parallel zones.

(i) *The Great Himalayas—Bahyagiri.* This comprises northern most ranges forming an array of magnificent peaks, all above the snow line. They have an average elevation of 20000 ft. and more than 100 peaks exceed this height. Some of the prominent peaks within Bahyagiri are as follow.

<i>Name of the peak</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Region</i>
Mt. Everest	29,028 ft.	Eastern Himalayas It lies at the Border of Tibet-Nepal.
Gurla Mandhata	25,355 ft.	Western Tibet
Kailash	22,028 ft.	—do—
Kanchenjunga	28,168 ft.	—do—
Dhaulagiri	26,869 ft.	—do—

Chooy	26,769 ft.	Western Tibet
Manashi	26,658 ft.	Western Nepal
Annapurna I	26,041 ft.	—do—
Annapurna II	26,041 ft.	—do—
Kabru	24,096 ft.	Border of Nepal and Tibet
Nanda Devi	25,645 ft.	Kumaon Himalayas
Kamet	25,443 ft.	—do—
Trisul	23,366 ft.	—do—
Mana peak	23,802 ft.	Garhwal Himalayas
Mukut Parvat	23,781 ft.	—do—
Chankhamba	23,420 ft.	—do—
Satopanth	23,183 ft.	—do—
Dunagiri	23,183 ft.	—do—
Kedarnath	21,700 ft.	—do—
Gangotri	21,700 ft.	—do—
Bhagirathi II	21,365 ft.	—do—

(ii) *The Middle Himalayas (Antargiri)*. The mountain ranges in this zone form an intricate system with an height of 10000 ft. to 18000 ft. above sea level. Here we come across challenging and unapproachable rock faces. Which vertically rise high forming steep chimneys or genderme over a ridge. It is here and nowhere else that the art of rock climbing can be best judged with accurate harmonisation of the arms, knees and body. Use of rope becomes a must. After crossing rocky terrain, we land in glacial field where large sections of ice sheets are located and as we march forward we find moraines along the glacial field which is normally above 16000 ft. We find here ice falls formed due to flow of snow from high mountains. Big crevasses separate the glacier proper from the ice falls. At times, due to great pressure, ice seracs or pinnacles of ice are formed which hang dangerously and hurt the unwary by frequent breaking.

(iii) *The Outer Himalayas—Upagiri* : They consist of the foot hills and range from 1500 ft. to 10000 ft. varying in altitude from place to place. Most of the hill stations are located in this area and forests spread over 86% of the total area which can be broadly thus classified.

(A) *Monsoon forest* : This covers the thickly wooded Tarai and

lower Himalayan forests upto 3000 ft. and covers the plains between Yamuna and Sharda and more particularly the area which lies below the foothills. This area has remarkable absence of water.

The great rivers preserve their course with same diminution in their volume, but all the minor streams that have their origin in the lower hills on entering this belt lose themselves in ice deposit that constitutes the substratum. This area is called as Tarai and Bhabar and the forests covering it provide an apron to the great Himalayas.

(B) *Coniferous tree forest area* : This is normally above 3,000 ft. and constitutes Binus Longi-flora, carpifolia (Khirsu) fir, and shodendron forests. In fact, most of the hill stations are located between 5,000—7,000 ft.

(C) *Alpine area* : Alpine shrubs are found above 10,000 ft. and a little above are alpine grasslands, which provide excellent fodder for the cattle and sheeps which move up during summer to these places. As we mount upwards to the pass, the chir or pine tree (Pines longifolia) with its long feathery tufts of leaves gives place to thick shady ibex (*onerosus delical*) zunipurous and rhodendron bushes.

Due to these interesting aspects and their monolithic magnitude, the Himalayas are not only a climbers' paradise but explorers' ideal haunt too.

### **Flora and fauna**

The Himalayas are known as the repository of vast mineral and herbal wealth. Besides its rich forests and rivers, it is the best habitat for the medicinal plants like Pyrethrum (vegetable insecticide), digitales piar putea (loxglosi) and aromatic plants like nepeta, mentha, juniperous saussaria, artemesia etc. which forms raw material for atropine, tincture and many other ligaments etc. The other well known plants are Jatawasi, Guggal, Mamire and Hathajari etc.

Today, the Himalayan fauna is thus classified :

- (i) Wild animals like boar, panthers, tiger are found upto 6,000 ft. Elephants live in Tarai.
- (ii) Musk dear, barking deer, ghural and Himalayan black

beer are available upto 10,000 ft.

(iii) In the higher alpine zone, ghural, snow leopard and bharal are found.

Truely, the Himalayas are the repository of minerals which are being extensively surveyed by the Geographical Survey of India.

### The moisture reservoir of India

To Himalaya alone and nothing else, India owes the prominent features of her climate. The massive barrier interrupts the monsoon clouds advancing from the southern seas and precipitates heavy rains on the Indian plains. At the same time, it protects the Indian mainland from the icy blasts of cold wind which originate from the Arctic region that sweeps across Siberia, central Asia, Pamirs and parts of Tibet, but do not reach India due to the massive Himalayan barrier.

Another important aspect of the Himalayan geology is that about twenty-two principal rivers which drain the Himalayan region emanate from high glacial fields, the most significant being Ganga and Yamuna, both in antiquity and sanctity. Atkinson has observed about this feature: "In the Himalaya, it is observed that all the main ridges and valleys have a constant tendency to follow the direction either parallel or at right angles to the main line of water parting. This tendency, it is true, is often disguised by the rapid succession of several sudden changes of direction which when represented on the small scale of our maps gives an apparent obliquity to both ridges, and rivers which has no existence in the elementary portions of which they are composed."<sup>1</sup> The draining area of the Kali is completed on the east by a great transverse ridge which runs down across western Nepal from the Tibetan water parting. The Ganges system on the other hand is bounded by another range near Rishikesh and Haridwar.

According to Dr. Chibbar, the Himalayan rivers can be conveniently classified into the following categories :

(i) *The pre-Himalayan rivers*—these are Sutlaj and Indus. The catchment area is nearly 1,25,460 sq. miles.

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1. S.K. Banerji, *Himalaya Gol.* I, 1952, P. 26.

- (ii) *The Great Himalayan Rivers*—In this category fall the famed Ganges, Kali, Gori, Gandak and Teetsa.
- (iii) *The lesser known Himalayan rivers*—The geologists have counted Beas, Ravi, Chenab and Jhelem etc.
- (iv) *The Shivalik rivers*—Tons, Hindon and Satlaj are counted as Shivalik rivers.

The Himalayan rivers get maximum water from melting of ice and snow as has been pointed out by Dr. S.K. Banerji : "An analysis of the river discharge data and precipitation in the catchments in the forms of rain and snow shows that the Himalayan rivers get nearly 60% from precipitation that falls as rain in the lower catchment. During July to November, when the sky remains cloudy, the contribution from snow and glaciers is reduced to about 35 percent. In fact, Himalayan hydrography forms an independent branch of study which may prove helpful for planning our irrigation and hydel projects."<sup>1</sup>

Civilisations have risen and fallen on the banks of these famed rivers. Men have solemnly pursued the silent paths, lying above treacherous rock faces, to the source of these rivers. Probably for this reason alone our ancient sages located the famed Dhams of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath and the perennial source of these life-giving rivers. Is it not a wonder of nature or divine will that Bhagirathi and Alakhnanda meet at Deoprayag and become Ganga while Yamuna meets Ganga at Allahabad after taking a bend of a quarter of North India.

Truely, the Himalayas are the moisture reservoir of the whole of north India. The future of entire human conglomeration in the vast plains of North India rests on how efficiently we plan the conservation of water which can be best done with the conservation of our forests and digging up of diversionary irrigation canal and small dams which will not only generate power but will also provide water for irrigation canals, drinking purpose and growing fruits and vegetable.

The exploration and study of Himalayan geography, geology, flora, fauna and its climatological phenomenon and a

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1. S.K. Banerji, *Himalaya*, Vol. I, 1952, P. 26.

hundred other matters connected with its life has now become most urgent for all those who are interested in the development of Himalayas and welfare of India.



## UTTARAKHAND—THE CRADLE OF EARLY CIVILISATION

I had ample opportunity of travel in the interiors of central Himalayas which has been given the ascription of Uttarakhand. Uttarakhand presents a panorama of infinite diversity, thickly wooded Tarai forests, arid zones, high altitude tracts, popular hill resorts, small isolated hamlets, roads and rivers, cooler places, green valleys, succulent pastures, places of pilgrimage and perpetual snows. It comprises of the four hill districts of Tehri, Pauri, Nainital and Almora and the three border districts of Uttarkashi, Chamoli and Pithoragarh. It borders Tibet in the north, Nepal in the east, the plains of Uttar Pradesh in the south and Mahasu and Kinnar district of Himachal Pradesh in the west. This area of 18530 sq. miles in the central Himalayas with its rising peaks and densely wooded valleys, has from time immemorial lent glory and dignity to the image of India. The Holy Dhams of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath are situated in this area and have ever since been the source of culture, tradition and reverence for the people of the Indian sub-continent. Every year, thousands of pilgrims from different parts of India flock here thus cementing the emotional unity of the

country. Probably this alone led our chroniclers to describe these places as the holy home of the Gods and Goddesses "The existence of the great shrines of Badri and Kedar, containing forms of Shiva and Vishnu, still hold a foremost position in the beliefs of the great majority of Hindus—to many the fruititious of all early desires is the growing glory of a visit to the sacred *Tirthas* by which the sins of the former birth are cleansed and exception from metamorphosis is obtained. Here are laid many of the scenes in the life of the deities, here Rama propitiated Mahadeva . . . here Arjuna and Krishna meditated on the Supreme Being and the Pandavas ended their earthly pilgrimage. Every rock and rivulet is dedicated to some deity or saint and has an appropriate legend. Nature in her wildest and most rugged form bears witness to the belief that here is the home of Gods, and when journeying to the mountains, which form the approach to the principal shrines, the traveller from the plains is told to proceed in respectful silence lest the Gods should be angered. He wearily feels the presence, and should the forbidden sound and music arise and the God in wrath hurls down avalanches on the offenders, then the awe-stricken pilgrim believes that he has seen God, terrible and swift to punish and seeks by renewed austerities to overt his displeasure. . . . In fact what Palestine is to the Christian, the home of this great gods, the great way to the final liberation".<sup>1</sup>

Uttarakhand continues to be the home of Gods and will certainly remain so in future.

### The land

The three hill districts of Pithoragarh, Chamoli and Uttarkashi have been given the ascription of Uttarakhand in the government records and as per local geographical denominations, the districts of Dehradun, Tehri-Garhwal, Pauri-Garhwal, Chamoli and Uttarkashi are known as Garhwal; that is how we separate Uttarakhand from Kumaon and Garhwal and always confuse it with mere three border districts of Uttarkashi, Chamoli and Pithoragarh. In fact, the entire Kumaon

1. *Himalayan Districts*, F.T. Athinson.

and Garhwal inclusive of three Uttarakhand districts was once known as "Uttarkuru" or "Brahmarishidesh". It extended from Kalsi-Arakote in the west to Vyas-Chandaus in the north-east and Tanakpore, Ramnagar, Muni-Ki-Reti and Dehradun in the south-west. Puranas have described this area as Kedarkhand which extended from Nari Khorsim (western Tibet) to Tarai Bhabar in the south-west. Puranas have described this area as Kedarkhand, Kinnerdesh and Manaskhand which extended from Nari-Khorsim (Western Tibet) to Tarai-Bhabar in the south, Garhwal in the west and Nepal in the east. Later on, the Puranic chronicles started describing the present Kumaon as 'Manaskhand' and Garhwal as 'Kedarkhand'. The entire areas has been thus described in Skandapurana—

*Agangadwar maryadam swetant barwenium tamsatapatati purvarwaks bauddhachalam subaham*

*Kedarmandalam khyant bhumyast dwichala sthalam*

References about Kedarkhand, Manaskhand, Kinnerdesh and Uttarakhand are found in various scriptures including Mahabharata and Ramayana which make pointed reference to Kulinda, Kalkoot and Anartdesh. In Mahabharata detailed description has been given about the various kingdoms and places which were subjudicated by Arjuna. This is probably one reason that Garhwal has been referred in some ancient texts as Panchaladesh and even today numerous places are known after the names of Pandavas as Pandosera, Panai, Pandukeshwar, Nili and Panduakhal. In these places, several dance forms are in existence after the glorious tradition of Pandavas and are known as Pandava Nrityas.

Shaktisangam Sutra has described Uttarakhand as—

*Kurmashya maheshani kadhyate  
srincesampratam*

*Shankesh dakshbhage kamakhya  
purvagochar uttere*

*Manshesh pachhima shardabhawet.*

The very name Kumaon is derived from Kurma, the tortoise incarnation of Vishnu giving it a mythological colouring. Legend has that Shri Ram sent the head of Kumbha Karna, the brother of Ravan to Kumaon through

Hanuman who left it near Champawat. As per Puranic story Lord Vishnu assumed the form of a tortoise or Kurma to destroy the demons. The scene of the fierce battle between Danawas and Devas came to be known as Kumaon.

In harmony with the geographical description in the ancient scriptures, we have definite traces of archaeological finds at Kalkoot (Kalsi), Haripur, Jagatram, Sinhpur, Lakhamandal, Birbhadra, Mayapur, Brahmapur, Mordhwaj, Kotedwar, Khilkuli, Govisana, Ujjain, Baijnath, Kartikeiapura (Joshimath), Champawat, Dwarahat, Gangolihat, Arakote, Srinagar, Simli, Tunganath, Chandrapuri, Katarmal, Gangotihat, and Jageshwar. These places remind the traveller and compel them to refresh their memory about the glorious cradle of civilisation that was once Uttarakhand.

### **The people**

This land of fact and fables is peopled by short heighted, tough and sturdy people who trace their origin from the Yaksas, Kinnars, Guhyas, and Khasees whose fortunes disappeared into oblivion with the passage of time. The Khasees have been identified by some historians with the early Aryan settlers whose counterparts have been found in other parts of India, speaking a dialect similar to theirs. Very often, they have also been identified as Yodheyas. Greek writers like Herodotus and Straha have referred to them as 'Kissi'. Ptolemy calls them 'Kissia'. The Khasiyas divided themselves into Thoks in lower area of the Himalayas and their chieftain was known as Thokedar or Sayana.

The Thoks fell before the onslaught of Katyurs who established a flourishing kingdom with their capital at Kartikeyapura (Joshimath) and later on at Baijnath.

In fact, Uttarakhand resembles a great smelting pot, into which races and tribes have been thrown together and subjected to every kind of intermixture, as a result of which the social framework of today is something very different from anything belonging to the remote past. There were frequent in-roads of invading armies who came to conquer but remained as local citizens and with the passage of time their identity was lost. However, some of them still maintain their old

marks like Jaunsaris, Gujars, Bokshees, Rawats and Tharus.

However, the history of Kumaon and Garhwal in early times is not clearly distinct from that of Northern India as a whole. The inhabitants also, as they now exist, may be said to belong to wider divisions of population. Those dwelling in the lower hills between the snowy range and plains are practically Hindus, and enjoy what is really and Indian climatic conditions as prevail in the plains below. But we have also to include within the ambit of the area the area known as Bhot, inhabited by the Bhotiyas, a tribe of Mongolians and Tibetan affinities, whose proper habitat is the snowy tract lying beyond the first range of high peaks and extending upto the watershed, when the headwaters of the great rivers take their rise. The climate there differs widely from that of the sub-Himalayan hills, and the conditions of life resemble those of Tibet, which it adjoins.

The history of the region is mostly disjointed and is available in piecemeal, till Katyuris finally settled over the region. The glimpses of early history are available through Lakhamandal inscription of Isvara Devi temple, Bageshwar, inscription as rendered by Atkinson, Taleshwar copper plate grant, Pandukeshwar plates, Gopeshwar inscription of Ashokachalla. The inscription carved on trident at Uttarkashi and Gopeshwar are remnants of ancient history. These landmarks of early history were visited and interpreted by early historians like Atkinson, Buhler, T.D. Gairola, Cakley, Jt. Goetez, Hari Krishna Raturi, Badri Dutt Pandey, Badri Shah Thulgharia, Rahul Sanskrityayan and Shiv Prasad Dabral. Amongst early pioneer writers Cunningham worked very hard to find out the real background of Kulindas who were supposedly preceded by Kiratas who inhabited the region around the sources of Ganga and Yamuna.

Amongst the most exciting and living trace of Indian history in Garhwal is Kalsi where in 1860, a rock edict was unearthed, heralding a new dimension in the history of Uttarakhand.

From the archaeological finds, the Ashokan pillar at Kalsi and the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta, we came to know about a place called Kartikeyapura or Kártipura

which was the capital of the Katuris. Huen Tsang has referred to it and in *Kavyamimamsa* of Rajsekhar we find definite descriptions about this ancient city. It is just possible that the ancient Kiratas established Kartikeyapura and later on came to be recognised as Katyuris like Khasas and later on recognised as Sakas. Instead of accepting the theory that all great races like Aryans and Sakas came from outside, why we can't accept the theory that these great races were born here as is made explicit by the facts of history and discovery of archaeological find that Aryans or Sakas were the original inhabitants of Uttarakhand which has been so much eulogised in our scriptures as the kingdom of Gods.

### **Definite traces of history**

Definite traces of history are available in Uttarakhand since and after the Mauryas, the positive piece of evidence being the Ashokan pillar at Kalsi. Kunnindas followed Mauryas and according to Menander territories falling between the Ganges and Yamuna were parts of the famous kingdom of Kulinda dynasty. In fact, the present Jaunsars seem to be their descendants. Ptolemy has also placed them in this region. Their coins have been found at various places. The coins of Amoghbhuti whom Cunningham places in 150 B.C. are similar to those of Sivapalita, and Hardatta, all of second century B.C. Kunnindas had some sort of trade and inter-communication with the Greeks. Kunnindas were also contemporaries of the Yodheyas and Arjunayanas.

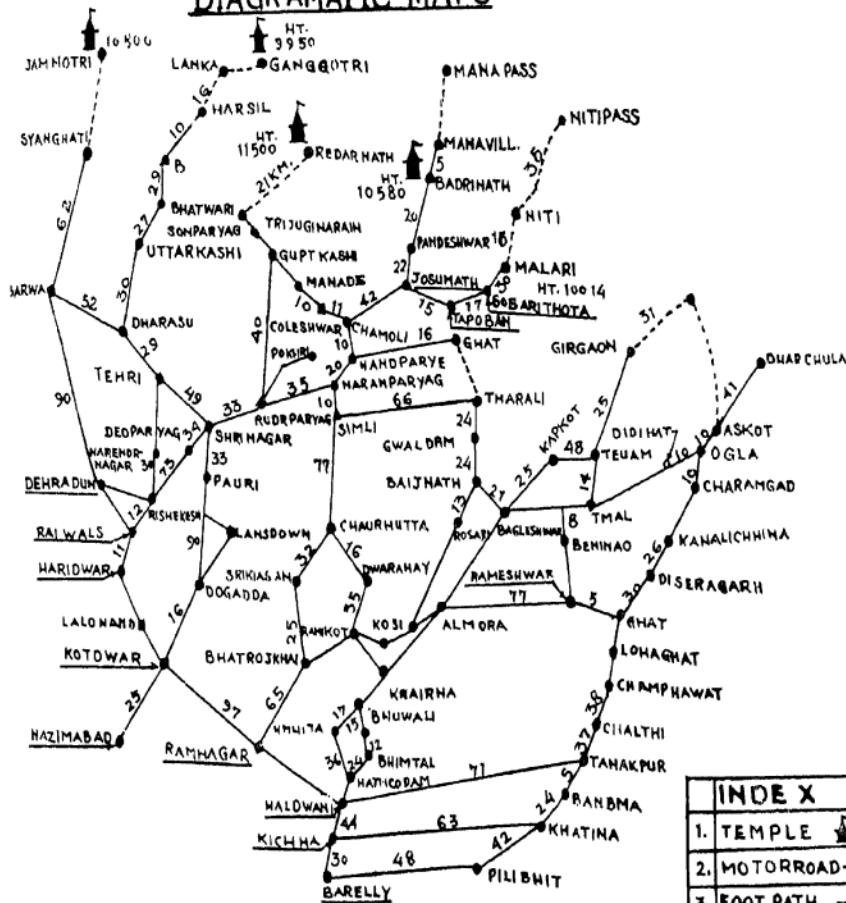
The physical aspect of the Khasiyas of Kumaon is distinctly Aryan. Their language is almost pure dialect.

Imperial Guptas had definite influence over Uttarakhand and probably their arms reached Kartikeyapura during the reign of Samudragupta, mention about which is found in the Allahabad pillar inscription. Some authors have identified this Kartikeyapura with Baijnath (Kumaon). This contention also does not seem tenable because Baijnath became Katyari capital only after a branch of Katyuris had shifted from Kartikeyapura (Joshimath) in about seventh century A. D. Farishta mentions not only about the extensive sway of Gupta arms but also of Rashtrakutas from south, upto the Himalayas.



## UTTARAKHAND YATTRA ROUTES

### DIAGRAMATIC MAPS





### The visit of Huen Tsang

Huen Tsang visited this part of the country in 634 A. D. and proceeded from Thaneshwar to Strughana in Saharanpore and across the Ganges to Madawar in the Bijnore district. He describes Mayura and Mayapur close to Haridwar. He has also given vivid description of his journey to Po-hi-ki-mo-pou-to or Brahmapore, which lay 50 miles north of Madawar. Cunningham was the first to place Brahmapore in Garhwal about which he observes that the Huen Tsang must have visited it.

It has been pointed out by some historians that Harsha extended the sway of his arms upto parts of Uttarakhand and annexed it within his territory.

### Signs of early civilisation

The small city kingdoms or scattered principalities which were being administered by indigenous or imported dynasties were only a passing phenomenon in the history of Uttarakhand. The central point of power in the annals of Himalayan history was the rise and fall of Katyari Dynasty, the traces of which can be found from the scattered remains of Lakhmandal, Kharsali, Barahat, Trijugi-Narayan, Kedarnath, Madhyawaheshwar, Adi-Badri, Dwarahat, Jageshwar, Bageshwar, Baijnath, Qangolihat, and Champawat. I had ample opportunity of visiting these temples not once but number of times and thus had ample opportunity to evaluate their historical importance in the history of Uttarakhand.

The architectural remains of these places when put together and placed in right perspective reveal and reflect the perfect designing and skill of execution of Uttarakhand style which had taken shape during the reign of Katyuris. The salient features of this architecture were lotus shaped roof, lion mounted over the elephant has been projected over lower *shikharas* of the temple which normally covered the audience hall. The outer walls of the temple were executed either in Panch Rath or Sapt-Rath pattern, giving the temples a cylindrical shape. The main temple is invariably surrounded by a couple of smaller temples which housed Gods and Goddesses of lower intensity.

### **Advent of Katyuris**

The extensive sway of Katyuri empire is proved not only from the archaeological finds which are strewn all over, but also from various inscriptions which are found in Uttarakhand. The most remarkable of these are the Katyuri inscriptions of Bageshwar which have since unfortunately disappeared, but fortunately for the benefit of historians, Mr. Atkinson had studied it and translated it. In this inscription, we find the name of Lalit-Surdeva who has also been named in Paundukeshwar copper plate grant. This copper plate grant has been placed by Kielhorn between 853 A. D. and 854 A. D. On the basis of calculations Jadunath Sircar has assigned the four rulers named in these inscriptions, viz, Nimbaraka, Istagana, Lalitsura and Bhudeva to the period between 796 to 890 A.D. If we accept the date 790 A.D. of Nimbaraka, we can easily reconstitute the entire Katyuri history because there were five more kings before him, starting with Basantan who migrated to Kartikeyapura to Bageshwar around 690 A.D. Kanakpal laid the foundations of Paramar dynasty at this time of the history near Devalgarh.

The great exodus from Kartikeyapura to Devalgarh and Bageshwar had started, in all probability, the last king at Joshimath was Vasudeva about whom Atkinson writes, "The ancient temple of Vasudev Giriraj Chandra Churamani". Thus Basudev seems to be in all probability no one else than Basantan who migrated to Katyur valley in Baijnath after the rise of a new power under Kanakpal in Chandpurgarhi.

It is not known who were the rulers before Basantan at Kartikeyapur. However, it can be conjectured that the Naga and Shalivahan kings mentioned in the Puranas and referred to in the inscription of Barahat were certainly predecessors of Katyuris and descendants of Khasees or Kissias or Yodheyas referred to in the inscription of Barahat were certainly predecessors of Katyuris and descendants of Khasas or Yodheyas referred to in ancient books and Greek writings.

As per Bageshwar inscriptions, the geneology of the Katyuri kings is as follows :

Basantan  
 |  
 nameless king  
 |  
 Karpardeva  
 |  
 Kalyan Rajadeva  
 |  
 Tribhuvanara Yanadeva  
 |  
 Nimbaratadeva  
 |  
 Ishtaganadeva or Ishtarandeva  
 |  
 Sri Lalit Sardeva  
 |  
 Sri Bhudevadeva or Bhudeva.

The kings who migrated to Bageshwar were great builders of temples and palaces but unfortunately little is known about them. The kings were probably Shaivites but in their enthusiasm for Shaivism they did not neglect other religions.

While Basantan consolidated his gains at the new place, his successors tried to expand it, the most powerful amongst them being Nimbaratadeva. It is implied that during his reign Pala kings invaded Kumaon under Dharampala who was fired with a missionary zeal to establish *Dharam* and extirpate the wicked. He probably visited Kedarnath also. The coming of Dharampala in the Uttarakhanda has also been referred by Rajsekhar in *Kavyamimamsa*. It is narrated that inspite of his defeat at the hands of Dharampala king Nimbaraka continued to expand his kingdom and patronised the construction of the famed temple at Jageshwar which bears testimony to the golden prime of Kumaon. Nimbaraka's son Ishtaganadeva succeeded him in 810 A.D. According to available evidence, he had to fight with his enemies with the edge of his sword slaying furious elephants which goes to show that the invaders were from the plains. Besides being daughty fighter, he was 'parammeheshwarah', a devout devotee of Lord Shiva. He caused to be constructed the temples of Navadurga, Mahisasurmardini, Lakulisa and Natraja at Jageshwar. He was succeeded by his competent son Lalitsurdeva, who was an intrepid fighter like his illustrious ancestors. However, he had the

misfortune of meeting the mighty warlords from Bengal, particularly Devpala, who according to Dr. R.C. Majumdar "is said to have exacted tributes from the whole of Northern India from the Himalayas to the Vindhya and from the eastern to the western ocean.

The line of Nimbaraka was succeeded at the tailend by Bhudeva, who succeeded his illustrious father Lalitsurdeva in 875 A.D. It is not known how his family rule came to an end. Solenadeva (895 A.D.) ascended the throne of Kartikeyapura. The new king was quite competent to safeguard the four corners of his kingdom. He was succeeded by his son Ishtadeva in 920 A.D. He had a brief spell of rule and was soon succeeded by his son Desatdeva in 931 A.D. who acquired "by the might of his arms unnumbered provinces on all sides, the owners of which coming to make his obeisance poured forth such incessant gifts of horses, elephants and jewels before him that they held in contempt the offerings made to Indra". He extended his territory right upto Tarai and caused the construction of some beautiful temples at Narayankoti and Baijnath. His successor Subhikshrajadeva was not as competent as his father but he kept intact the glorious traditions of his forefathers. He was a man of letters and a dedicated Vaishnavite.

The glorious kingdom of Katyuris started disintegrating after Subhikshrajadeva. His successor Dhanadeva and Bisadeva proved incompetent and caused widespread revolt by their tyranny. Smaller Thokedars of Askote, Doti, Baramdeo, Dwarahat and Lakhanpore rose in revolt and established themselves as independent kingdoms. The main line of the Katyuris had to satisfy itself with the control of the Katyur Valley and Danpur till Chands of Champawat rose into prominence in Kumaon and Pauwars in Garhwal who closed a crowded page in the history of Uttarakhand and inaugurated an era of intense activity in Manaskhand known as Kurmanchal and Kedarkhand which came to be known as Garhwal.

In next chapters, I shall give you a brief account about the land and people of these regions so that my readers are able to enjoy the best of the land, hospitality of the people and their culture.

## THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF GARHWAL

In order to better understand a place, it is better to know its geographical feature and people. Keeping this in mind, I will like to give you a glimpse of the land and people of Garhwal and then about the Kumaon.

Garhwal, the epitome of the Himalayas where Lord Vishnu chose to act the world drama is inhabited by tough, hardy and enduring people. It is bordered on the *north* by Tibet and in the *east* by Kumaon, on the *south* by Bijnore and Dehradun and on the *west* by Sirmaur and Nahan. The physical features of the area have been best described by Walton as "The vast tracts are composed of bare rocks or are covered with forests. In some parts such features are confined to the upper parts of the mountains whose sides and base are adorned with the richest fertility, whilst in other parts the fairest slopes or the finest valleys are succeeded by continuous miles of river glen where precipices and woods extend to the lowest depths."

It was divided into petty chieftains, numbering fifty two who were put together by Ajaipal in fifteenth century A. D.

### **The land**

The territory east of Alaknanda on the one hand, Nainital-Almora on the other and Bijnore, Dehradun district in the south was known as Pauri Garhwal (British Garhwal) and the territory of Alaknanda on the one hand, Pauri—on the east, Sirmaur and Saharanpur in the north was known as Tehri-Garhwal (Royal Garhwal) till 1960. Chamoli was carved out of Pauri Garhwal, and Uttarkashi out of Tehri Garhwal in 1960. This region is very well connected with the roads from Rishikesh and Kotdwara which merge at Srinagar and from here, the road climbs all along the Mandakini and Alaknanda right upto Gaurikund in Kedarnath and Badrinath dham. Starting from Kotdwara to Srinagar, the road passes through Dogadda and Satpuli to Pauri where the District and Divisional headquarters are located. Pauri presents infinite view of brilliant Himalayan panorama.

The road descends down from Pauri to Srinagar. Srinagar is a beautiful town which is gradually coming up. It was once seat of the Panwar kings but due to Gurkha plundering and the floods the town lost most of its magnificent buildings particularly in the floods of 1830 when most of the magnificent buildings, parts of which could still be seen or imagined through the paintings of Maularam. However, Srinagar still preserves some remnants of the glorious past.

A little ahead of Srinagar is Rudraprayag which is known for the confluence of Mandakini and Alaknanda. The spot where Jim Corbett had his famous kill of a tiger suddenly brought this incongruous place into a famed place.

Across Mandakini lies the glorious Kedarnath valley.

The main route reaches to Badrinath all along the upstream of Alaknanda passing through Rudraprayag, Karanprayag, Chamoli andd Joshimath.

### **The people**

Garhwalis prefer physical labour and they are good tillers. In short, they are honest and hardworking. This makes them intrepid fighters which facilitated their entry into Garhwal regiment and in 1853 they were combined in the 2nd Battalion of the Third Gorkha regiment in Almora and were sub-

sequently sent to Lansdowne Cantonment where a separate unit was established. Their skillful soldiery brought them to the forefront and in 1901 a new Battalion was created and named 39th Garhwal Rifles. During world war I of 1914 for this uncommon courage and valour Naik Darban Singh Negi was honoured with the highest insignia—Victoria Cross. The next was Rifleman Gabar Singh Negi of 2nd Bn. Garhwal Rifles. Many more followed afterwards.

### The legend

It may appear surprising to some readers that the name of a holy land should be applied to the Himalayan province of Garhwal, yet there is no difficulty in proving the claim to the title. The great shrines of both the leading deities of modern India, Shiv and Vishnu, the active partners in the Hindu triad or trinity, are situated within its bounds, and these places, Kedarnath and Badrinath, are the supreme objects of pilgrimage to devout Hindus beyond all Tirthas or holy places, either at Benares, Gaya, Prayag or Puri. The mountain fastness, which are believed to be the dwelling place of Siva and Vishnu, are regarded as sacrosanct, and more merit is obtained by the long and toilsome journey to the snowy peaks than to any other of the numerous centres of pilgrimage throughout India. The very sight of everlasting snows is said to bestow sanctity and bliss; nay, it is written in the Skandpurana—"He who thinks of Himanchal, though he should not behold him, is greater than he who performs all worship in Kashi (Benares). In a hundred ages of the gods I could not tell thee of the glories of Himanchal. As the dew is dried up by the morning sun, so are the sins of mankind by the sight of the Himanchal."

According to Puranas, the early inhabitants were either Asuras or Nagas and Painkhanda (Badrinath Dham) was the kingdom of legendary demon king Hiranyakashyap and Yodhipur (present Joshimath) was his capital. Leaving aside the hypothetical stories about the divine kings and queens, we have ample evidence of men and women who lived and meditated here on the divine heights of Himalayas. The most remarkable and momentous incidents in the history of

Garhwal was when Ved Vyasa wrote Mahabharata and Skandpurana near Badrikashrama and centuries later Sankracharya travelled the interiors of Garhwal and established the famed Maths of Joshimath and Okhimath and the holy Dhams of Badrinath and Kedarnath.

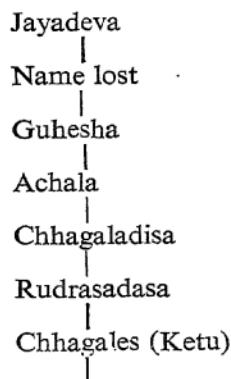
Kedarkhand now described as Garhwal is the birthplace of Ganga and Yamuna, the twin holy rivers, on the banks of which scores of holy places like Panch Kedars, Panch Badris, Panch Kashis and Panch Prayags are located. I had the privilege to visit each and every place connected with our divine tradition not once but number of times.

### **History**

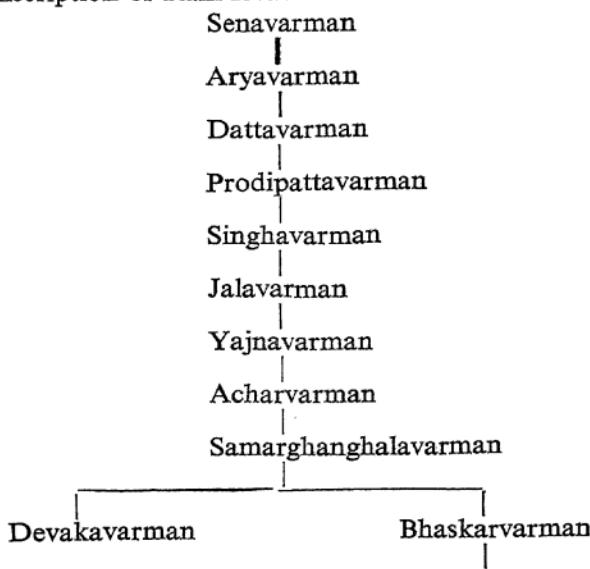
During Brahmanical period (after Vedic period), Garhwal had come to be known as Brahmarshidesh. In Mahabharata, Garhwal has been described as Panchaladesa. Even today, many places are known and identified as Pandusira, Panduakhal etc. Panch Pandavas entered Garhwal alongwith Draupadi on way to Swargarohini and that is why even today numerous places are known after them and certain dance forms exist after the folklore of Pandavas. Such folktales are enacted, year after year, with great gusto and fervour.

### **The Lakhamandal dynasty**

Apart from the dynasties at Brahmapore and Govisana, we also find traces of ancient civilisation supported by sufficient inscriptions at Lakhamandal across Jamuna in Dehradun district on the Barahoti-Mussoorie road. The archaeological finds reveal besides rich art work, the history of the two dynasties which ruled in this part of the country. The first dynasty belonged to about 5th century A.D. The Lakhamandal inscription opens with salutations to Nagendranya (Parvarti) and proceeds to give the geneological tree of the local dynasty as follows :



According to the editor of the inscriptions, the blank space at the fourth order of chronology suggests that one more name being between Achala and Chhagaladesa also might have been lost; who were these rulers is a pertinent question. This dynasty was later on overthrown by Singhpura dynasty in around 6th century A. D. A list of the Prasasti of Isvara who belonged to the royal race of Singhpura, for the spiritual welfare of her deceased husband, who was called Sri Chandra Gupta, the son of king of Jalandhara. The following geneology is available from the inscription of Rani Isvara :



Ripughngkala  
 |  
 Kapilvarman  
 |  
 Chandragupta

Kapilvarman was the prince of Jalandhara who subsequently married Isvara who caused the inscription under reference to be inscribed.

The dynasty belonged to the line of Yadu or the Yadavas of the lunar race who had ruled over the country since the beginning of the Yuga. The history of this dynasty is nowhere available for a detailed study. It can be an interesting conjecture to attribute the Asvamedha sacrifice at Jagatram (Kalsi). To this dynasty of Lakhamandal which has been described by some historians as Yodheyas who could possibly be interpreted as Yadavas or Yadus of these inscriptions. In fact Silavarman of the Asvamedha Yajna of Jagatram could be no one else than Singhavarman of this dynasty.

### **The downfall of Katyuris**

I have already dealt about the Katyuris whose empire started disintegrating after Subhikshakata Deva. His successor Dhanda-deva and Biradeva proved incompetent and caused widespread revolt by their tyranny. Smaller thekedaras of Askote, Doti, Baramandala, Dwarahat and Lakhnepore rose in revolt and established themselves as independent kingdoms. The main king of the Katyuris had to satisfy himself with the control of Katyur valley and Danpur till Chands of Champawat in Kumaon and Panwars of Chandpurgarhi in Garhwal rose into prominence and closed a crowded page in the history of Uttarakhand and opened a new one, full of historic events.

### **The kingdom of Garhwal**

It has already been explained how Kanakpal established himself around 753 A.D. and laid the foundation of an independent Garhwal kingdom at a time when Basantan moved into Katyur Valley. It is really shocking that from Kanakpal (713 A.D.) to Ajaipal (1358—1398 A.D.) we have no definite trace of history. In fact, there is an ample scope to make research into the secrets of history during this period of history when Garhwal seems to

have fallen into oblivion.

Since and after Ajaipal, we are on much firmer ground due to "Manodanya-Kavya" written by Yetis Rai who has supplied the list of kings after Ajaipal. Ajaipal established his capital at Chandpurgarhi, the remains of which can still be seen. He has been compared with Yudhistra who descended from the Lunar lineage and whose name was sufficient to give a tremor to the heart of many a king. He is said to have unified the entire tract of Garhwal and was probably the first ruler to call it Garhwal instead of Kedarkhand. His territory extended from Badhan Pargana on the borders of Kumaon in the east and Yamuna in the western limit of his possessions. He also transferred his capital from Chandpur to Devalgarh in 1412 and subsequently it was shifted to Srinagar in 1517 by later kings who found Srinagar centrally and strategically located.

Man Shah ascended the throne of Garhwal (1571—1610) and successfully carried his arms right upto Champawat and after crossing Kali subdued the Gyalpo of Dapa in western Tibet. The Mughal emperor conferred the title of Shah on him. In the year 1625, the Garhwalis procured the aid of Rikha Lodi and marched into Dapa (Tibet) in retaliation for raiding the upper part of Garhwal. They took control of the Tholing Math and even annexed upper reaches of the Sutlej river. Raja Fateb Shah (1634—1710) proved a powerful ruler whose exploits have been mentioned even by the hermits of Tsaprang mission (1625—50). The Panwars received first setback in their powers from the Rohillas who defeated and plundered the Garhwalis in the year 1557 when Raja Pratap Shah was controlling the fortunes of Panwar dynasty. Raja Pradyumna Shah (1787—1804) was the last absolute ruler of Garhwal and incidentally of Kumaon also.

### The chaotic years

Gorkhas—the short statured, daughty fighters who wrested Kumaon in 1970—were now threatening Garhwal. Pradyumna Shah tried to ward them off by paying a tribute of Rs. 25,000/- which the Gorkhas initially accepted but later on revoked it and held seige of the capital—Srinagar. Maularam, the court poet of the Panwars has thus portrayed the entire incident in these words :

Daughty fighters were Gorkhas,  
 Guns roared all around the hills.  
 They raised such thunder and fire  
 That the downfall of Srinagar  
 Seems imminent, and comes.

Pradyumna Shah fled to Saharanpur and the Gorkhas in their goose chase succeeded in annexing Dehradun in 1804. Pradyumna Shah did not sit idle and continued to counter Gorkhas with the help of Britishers who ultimately drove them away from Dehradun and Garhwal after a series of campaigns which ended with the treaty of Sigauli in 1814-15. As per terms of the treaty Kali river was fixed as the western limit of Nepal and the Britishers annexed the entire Uttarakhand except Tehri Garhwal which lies east of Alaknanda and Mandakini. Sudharshan Shah (1814—1850) was the first ruler of Garhwal with his capital at Tehri. It has now been divided into the twin districts of Tehri Garhwal and Uttarkashi.

The Garhwal kings were great builders of places and patronised fine arts. Maularam lived in the court of Pauwar kings at Srinagar.

## THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF KUMAON .

The area consisting of three hill districts of Almora, Nainital and Pithoragarh is known as Kumaon and its inhabitants as Kumaonese. Sanskrit poets have unceasingly sung about the beauties which nature has bestowed on this part of the country. It was probably this reason which inspired eminent Indians like Swami Vivekanand, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru to visit Kumaon and meditate there on the problems of life space and divine.

### People

This fairyland of fact and fables is peopled by short statured, tough, sturdy, honest and intelligent people who are known to the outsiders as 'Pahari' but the appropriate word for them is Kumaoni since former is a vague term to describe any class of people. Ancient texts have made numerous references about people inhabiting this land. Kumaon was known as Kinnerdesh which extended from Nari Khorsem (western Tibet) to Tarai Bhabar in the south and from Garhwal in the east to Nepal in the west. It was inhabited by Yaksas, Kinnar, Guhyas and Khas. Khas people have been indentified with the early Aryan settlers since their counterparts have been found in other parts of

India, speaking a dialect similar to them. Even Greek writers like Herodotus and Strabo have referred about them as Kissi and Ptolmey mentions them as Kissia. The Khasias divided themselves into thoks and their chieftain was known as thokdar. These thoks fell before the onslaught of Katyurs but did not disappear altogether. The end of these thoks came centuries later when Gurkhas annexed Kumaon in 1770 and finally Britishers gave the last nail in the coffin in 1815. Britishers took hold of Kumaon administration under the treaty of Sitoli.

Whatever may be political implications of Khas history but there is no doubt about their intrepid qualities as dauntless fighters to which Kumaon Regiment bears testimony. Besides martial tradition they have inherited belief in numerous gods and goddesses, ghosts and spirits. They burn sacrificial fires with Trisuls (three pronged lance) and red of Airhi fixed in the centre of sacrificial pit. Abounding is the faith of a Khasia in Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati who protects the four corners of Kumaon. Amongst the local gods and goddesses Bhumia, Bhairav and Nanda are worshipped. They protect the land, harvest and people. Khas people did not recognise vedic gods and goddesses till recently and many of the Brahmanic rituals were unknown to them. Crime was hitherto unknown and all cases of indiscipline were settled by invoking the village god Jagar. So menacing is the impact of this system that the danger of being indentified by the village god keeps defaulters shuddering under the devastating impact of public insinuation and exposure.

The main occupation of a Kumaoni is agriculture, rearing cattle, small trade and join army.

### **History—the ascendancy of Chands**

Before the ascendancy of Chands the history of Kumaon is available in piecemeal.

Som Chand was a Chandrabansi Rajput who founded the dynasty of Chands at a time when he found chaos and established order. According to tradition, when Katyari Kings were unable to control the country, some wise men were sent as messengers to Kannauj and Prayag who selected Som Chand as the new king. According to another legendary account when a Raja of Kannauj was going to Badrinath for pilgrimage, he was accompanied by

his younger brother who was liked by the ruling Katyari king Brahmadeva and married his daughter to him. He gave entire area in and around Champawat to his son-in-law. Whatsoever may be the cause of Som Chand's ascendancy, it is known for certain that he appeared in the history of Kumaon around 953 A. D. and not only consolidated his position very well but soon launched annexationist campaigns in the neighbouring territories.

He was followed in quick succession by Atma Chand, Puna Chand, Indra Chand, Sansar Chand, Sudha Chand, Hammira and Bina Chand. Atkinson has assigned nearly eighty years to these rulers and he is again of the opinion that the reign of Bina Chand ended around 1100 A.D. when the Khasiyas rose in revolt. In fact, after him we have a thick veil of oblivion except for the meteoric rise and fall of Crachallaneva (1223 A.D.) who like Ashokachalla of Garhwal advanced up to Katyar Valley and is claimed to have annexed Kartipura (Baijnath). He was a devout Buddhist.

#### **Restoration of Chand rule**

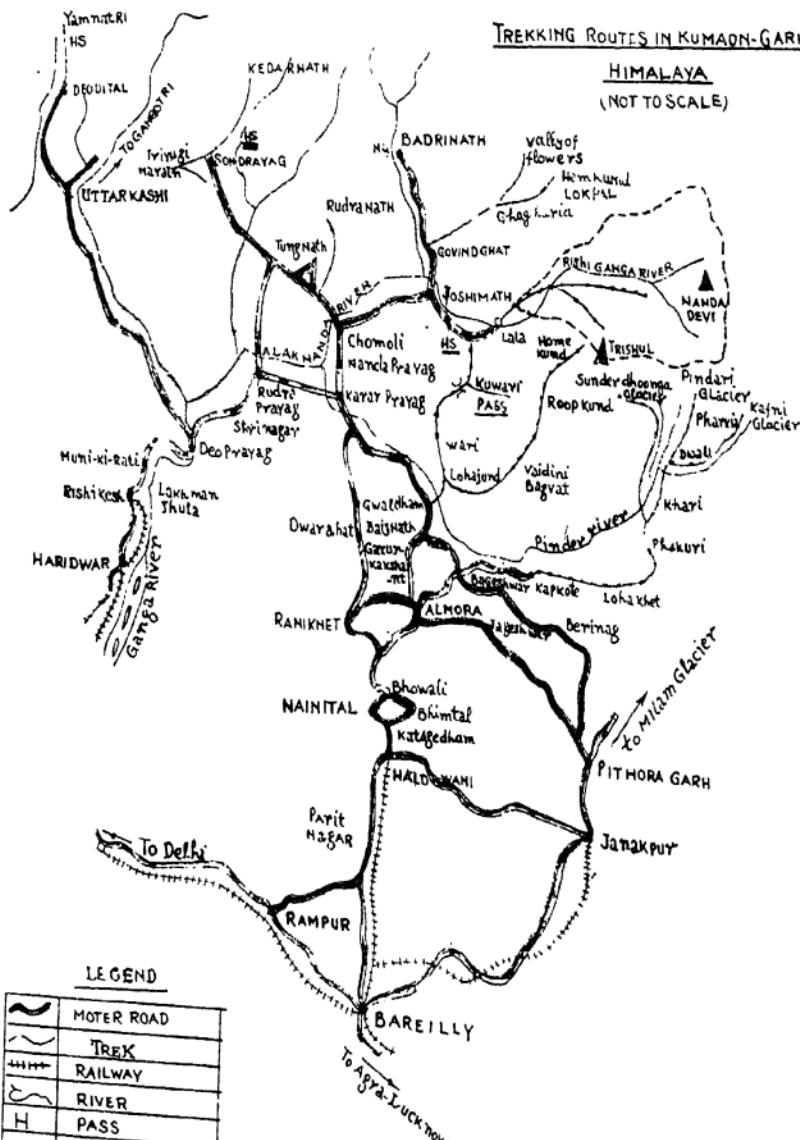
The reign of Chand rulers was marred and interrupted with occasional rise and falls, after the royal diadem fell under spells of historical causation. The first comeback to power was staged by Bina Chand who wrested power and cleared his country of petty chiefs. He was probably succeeded by Neera Chand who engaged himself with the task of consolidating his gains. There is no continuity during this period and moreover according to certain historians a new line of Chands was established by Tohar Chand who came from Jhunsi (Allahabad). He was succeeded by his illustrious nephew Garpur Gyan Chand after a brief interlude. Raigaon pillar inscription of A.D. 1367 speaks of his extensive exploits. He also tried to wrest Katehar (Rohilkhand) and probably succeeded in getting hold of it with the consent of Feroz Shah Tughluq. His reign was quite long as is evident from his other inscriptions of 1390 A.D. and 1419 A.D. He also constructed a temple at Champawat. Harihar Chand succeeded Garur Gyan Chand but his reign did not last long and soon he was succeeded by Bharati Chand (1437—59) who overthrew the yoke of Doti after prolonged conflict and his son Ratan Chand (1459—88) extended his sway over Jumla (Nepal) and his

expansionist designs were carried further by Kirti Chand (1488—1503). Raja Kirti Chand shifted his capital from Champawat to Almora. Nothing is known about the intermediate period which passed between Rudra Chand (1566-69) and Kirti Chand (1488—1503). It is related that Rudra Chand visited Lahore to meet Akbar in 1588. Farishte has mentioned that “of these princes there are five principal reigns on the north and five others on the south, each of whom has numerous tributary rajas dependent on him. The Raja of Kumaon also possesses an extensive dominion and a considerable quantity of gold is produced by washing the earth mounds in the country.”<sup>1</sup>

It is not known who succeeded Rudra Chand except for the well known fact that in 1638 Raja Baj Bahadur Chand ascended the throne of Almora and continued to rule till 1678. He is said to have lent considerable support to Shah Jehan’s Commander Khalilullah Khan in the latter’s campaign in Doon Valley and Garhwal foothills. He also advanced into western Tibet and defeated Tibetans in 1671. He is also said to have defeated Raja of Garhwal and wrested large chunks of his territory. Thus by the close of his reign, he was almost master of entire Uttarakhand. But unfortunately, after him deluge followed and in 1743 Rohillas laid the country waste and committed arson, loot and plunder. In fact, due to continued attacks of Rohillas, Raja Kalyan Chand (1731—48) and Deep Chand (1748—74) had to face serious problems during the reign of Raja Mohan Chand (1777—79) and (1786—88) Harak Deo Joshi the trusted minister and Commander in Chief of Kalyan Chand, was arrested and held captive by the enemies. But Joshi was the last person to sit idle and curse the cycle of time and fate. Soon he engineered the help of Raja Lalit Shah of Garhwal (1778—80) who sent Prince Pradyumna to control and capture Kumaon and protect the throne of Champawat. In 1779 he became the virtual master of the entire Uttarakhand but as luck would have it, soon the fierce fighters from Nepal marched into Kumaon and threatened Garhwal. Wars between Garhwal and Kumaon proved ruinous for both the kingdoms.

1. Atkinson. *Himalayan Gazeteer* Vol. II, P. 452.

## TREKKING ROUTES IN KUMAON-GARHWAL



### LEGEND

	MOTOR ROAD
	TREK
	RAILWAY
	RIVER
	PASS
	PEAK
	Boundary - Hamdard
	HS HOT SPRINGS
	Tourist Places
	Other Places

trek - O-tour  
Freemasons Hall, G.B Pant Marg,  
Nainital, 263001  
U.P. India



### The lightening campaign of Gurkhas

From 1778 onwards, Ran Bahadur Singh was the Raja of Nepal and it was during his reign that the aggressive policy of the state was pursued vigorously. Knowing the distracted conditions of Kumaon, the Nepal Durbar in 1789 resolved on a invasion of Kumaon. Early in the following year, two forces were sent into Kumaon, with the result that after some skirmishes, the country was conquered and Almora was entered by the victorious. Ironically, the loading spirit behind Gurkha invasion was again Harak Deo Joshi, who for some years had acted as a king maker and dictator in the hills, and now, in despair of any settled government, is said to have thrown his lot with the Nepalese, and assisted them in the invasion of Kumaon and then Garhwal.

The short statured but daughty fighters who were fierce fighters pierced straight across the invincible Himalayan barrier of Uttarkhand and made a headlong thrust into the kingdom of Kumaon, Garhwal, Sirmaur and Kangra. The Garhwalis appear to have formed a well laid plan of aggression with great determination. Pradyumna Shah tried to ward them off paying an annual tribute of Rs. 25000/- which the Gorkhas initially accepted but later on revoked it and besieged Srinagar. Maularam, the court-poet of the Pauwars has thus described the siege of Srinagar—

Daughty fighters as Gorkhas were  
Guns roared across the hills  
They fired thunder and fire  
The fall of Sringar was imminent.

Pradyumna Shah fled to Saharanpur and the Gorkhas in their goose chase succeeded in annexing Dehradun in 1804. But Pradyumna Shah did not sit idle and continued to counter Gurkhas with the help of Britishers who ultimately drove them away from Dehradun and subsequently from Garhwal after a series of campaigns which culminated with the signing of the treaty of Sigauli in 1814—15. As per the terms of treaty Kali river was fixed as the western limit of Nepal and the Britishers annexed the entire Uttarakhand except Tehri Garhwal which lies east of Alaknanda and Mandakini. Sudarshan Shah (1814—50)

became the first ruler of Tehri Garhwal. He established the capital at Tehri which was subsequently shifted to Narendranagar.

The rule of the Gurkhas was oppressive in the extreme and very heavy taxes were imposed. The people of Kumaon and Garhwal still remember the Gorkhali period as "Gorkhiyana." However, the Gurkhas as a race have been described by Fraser in his words "Veteran soldiers, with a fearlessness of danger and much of the true and high spirit of a soldier—that self-being of life at naught in comparison with the performance of duty, and that high sense of honour which forms his most attractive ornament and raises his character to the highest. They are cheerful, patient of fatigue, industrious at any labour to which they are put, very tractable and quiet, and from what has fallen under my own observation and knowledge, not cruel."

### **The British occupation of Uttarakhand**

The lightening campaign of the Gurkhas did not last long and soon they were driven by the Britishers across the Kali river but not without mere fighting at stiff opponents with the British occupation of Kumaon and Garhwal, the ancient dynastic rule of the Panwars in the Garhwal and Chands in Kumaon ended.

Under the terms of treaty of Sigauli, Kumaon was given the status of new regulated province, although it formed part of the north-western provinces of the company's dominion in India. The administration of Kumaon was handed over in the hands of Commissioner in the year 1839.

### **Parakramo vijayete**

So runs the war song of Kumaon Regiment which was raised as far back as 1780. The present regimental centre at Ranikhet was founded in 1917. Kumaon troops have fought on all the battlefronts and have brought home numerous awards for valour and conspicuous gallantry. Kumaon Regiment has the rare distinction of producing two Chiefs of the Army Staff i.e. Gen. S.M. Srinagesh and Gen. K.S. Thimayya.

### **The borderland**

In the upper region of Kumaon which consists of Millam,

Darma, Vyas and Chaudans is inhabited by Bhotias. They are also known as saukiyana. The principal castes amongst them are Pangti, Jangpangi, Rawats and Dhammasattus, rest of them add the name of their village after their surname e.g. Gunjiyal, Martolia, Burfal and Netwal. Bhotias are short statured, sturdy and honest people, usually moving around in tight fitting pants with a loose garment fastened around the waist with a cord and topped by a wool cap over the head. The men plough the land at the beginning of the season, tend cattle or sheep, trade in wool, shilajeet, herbs and kasturi. They while away leisure time in drinking chakti or chang—a local variety of liquor. Women keep the house economy supplemented by collecting grass, fuelwood and herbs. They never sit idle and can always be found weaving carpets in their spare time. With the beginning of winter they come down to their lower settlements and go up at the start of summer season. The scene of a Bhotia family moving up and down with their household appurtenances loaded on the back of yak, jhaboos and goats presents unique sight. The caravan is normally led by the women in their best attire and migration is announced with the beat of drums.

Keeping pace with the changing time and advancement in education the Bhotias also changed their outlook and aptitude. They began to work with the survey parties and won laurels the most remarkable figure being Pd. Kishan Singh and Nain Singh. From this illustrious family in our times, we have Harish Rawat as one of the foremost mountaineers who climbed Everest.

We have numerous castes and sub-castes inhabiting Kumaon, prominent being Joshi, Pant, Pandey, Thulgharia, Shah, Rautela, Manral, Pal, Rajbar, Chand and Bist. Most of them trace their origin from Maharashtra, Marwar, Gujarat, Central India, Nepal and even Bengal. Their belief does not seem unfounded since their height and complexion are unusual as compared to an average Kumaoni. They are intellectually much advanced and have been pioneers in the field of politics, literature, administration, science and social work. The greatest amongst them are Pandit Gobind Ballabh Pant, Badri Dutt Pandey, Mohan Lal Shah Thulgharia, Badri Shah Thulgharia, Dr. Hem Chandra Joshi, Sumitranandan Pant, Dan Singh Bisht, P.C. Joshi, Narayan Dutt Tewari, K.C. Pant and Chandralal Shah Thulgharia, who

have made outstanding contribution for Kumaon.

In addition to above classes of people there are numerous other nomadic tribes like Dok Pa, Gaddi, Khadewal, Ban Rawat, Dotiyal and Tharus who wander place to place in pursuit of livelihood forming an inseparable part of Kumaon scene.

### **Self-perpetuating society**

The Kumaon way of life is most simple and self-perpetuating being in essence the very synthesis of ancient culture and modern civilisation. In giving this dynamic character to the culture of Kumaon, Almora has always played significant role like Lucknow has done in Oudh and Lahore in pre-partition Punjab. Almora being the seat of power, people flocked here from different parts of India and carried home latest cultural trends and advancement in civilisation. Kumaonese till recently followed the rigours of caste assiduously but now in pursuance to the general trend a liberal attitude has come to take place. However, these rules were not strictly applicable to Bhotiyas since they had their own rules of propriety-impropriety, marriage and other ceremonies mainly derived from Indo-Tibetan cultures. The Bhotiyas of Darma Valley have distinct customs for marriage. They hold a function called 'Rang Bhang' in which all the villagers gather round the village fire, where a barrel containing chakti is placed out of which men and women drink freely. They merrily go round the fire singing and dancing. It is during this process that prospective pairs enter into a pleasure sequence and ultimately to disappear for making love, which is never looked down. Later bridegroom's party contacts bride's family and asks for the hand of the girl. Another feature of Bhotiya life is sharing of one wife by two or more brothers or marrying the widowed sister-in-law by one of the brothers of the deceased. Their society does not entertain any prejudices of sex and drinking is never looked down. But with the spread of education and increasing communication with the outer world the old taboos are fast breaking.

### **Women and folklore**

Kumaoni women are fair complexioned, well built, pink cheeked and exceedingly good looking. They attire themselves in a petticoat like frock over which they wear full sleeved blouse and

wrap round their shoulders and hips a coloured cloth . They are fond of jewellery and love to wear beads, rings and other trinkets. Women do more work in Kumaon than the menfolk. Education among the women was very low at one time but now it is becoming popular. Like every other Indian lady, they are fond of music and sing songs in sweet memory of their husbands who are mostly in army. Down below the pine trees one can hear the unmistakable voice of the love lorn lady—

Had I been a bird,  
I would have flown to the border  
Where my husband is  
On the sentry post.

### **Malusahi**

In the folklore of Kumaon, the legend of Malusahi is as intricately woven as Hir-Ranjha in Punjab. The story in brief, as it runs round, narrates that Malu, a boy living in Dwarahat once saw Rajula—a Bhotia girl, in dream. He was so charmed by her beauty that he left his home in search of her and after walking some two hundred miles on foot contacted the girl who had also similar dream. Malu approached girl's father Sunapati Shauka for the hand of his daughter but he did not agree. Malu had to struggle a lot to win the hand of Rajula. Nevertheless, he succeeded. This story forms an integral part of Kumaon folklore.

### **Love for art and music**

Closely associated with the Kumaonese love for nature is the love for music and art. Local folk dances and songs are supplemented by wind and percussion instruments like bansura, bina and hurak. He who plays hurak is known as hurkiyani, most probably his wife or daughter. They go from place to place, narrating folklore, singing Riturenā (change of seasons) or depicting the sports of gods and goddesses. At the time of fairs and festivals or at the harvest time, Kumaonese can be seen dancing jwara or other forms of folkdance. Music is so much in the blood of Kumaonese that the ringing voice of a Kumaonese belle can be heard from a distant place—

*Beru pako bar maso  
O Narena*

*Kafal pako cheta  
O meri chela  
O meri chela*

It was probably this love for music which attracted Udai Shankar and Anna Pavlova to set up their dance schools in Almora.

Kumaon inherits its rich treasures of art from Katyur Kings who built magnificent temples of Baijnath, Dwarahat, Jageshwar, Bageshwar, Katarmal and Champawat. These temples have been built after the style prevailing in central India where each temple is surrounded by smaller temples which house smaller deities of the four corners. The figures of Yaksha and Yakshanis have been carved out in detail with great grace and poise but the finest specimen of Kumaon art are the sculptures of Lord Shiva and Mahishashurmardini which have been chiseled out with excellence. Besides these ancient forms of art, Kumaon inherits a rich tradition of folk art, samples of which can be seen outside every house. Kumaonese also model figures of Shiva and Parvati during Harola, a local festival which falls during rainy season.

In modern times the music and art of Kumaon has produced gifted artists of stage and painting like Mohan Upreti, Lenin Pant, Brijendralal Shah, Brij Mohan Shah, Bhuwanlal Shah, Rangdhir Singh Bisht and Salim.

Kumaonese are fond of fairs and festivals because they provide them ample opportunity for social mixup visiting places, reviving old friendships, trading and display their wear and jewellery; about which women are very enthusiastic. The prominent fairs of Kumaon are Jauljibi, Bageshwar, Debidhura and Thal. Amongst festivals the most famous are Nanda Devi, Olkiya and Diwali. The festival of Nanda Devi has a legend behind it. Nanda Devi, the sister of Chand kings was once chased by a buffalo while she was strolling in the royal gardens. Fearing the impending doom the young maiden took shelter behind a banana plant. Learning the plight of his sister, the Chand King killed the buffalo. This story was subsequently interpreted as Durga story and ever since buffaloes began to be sacrificed at different places before the altar of Nanda.

Jauljibi and Bageshwar were our trade centres for the people of Tibet, Nepal and India. Once traders traded here in borex, sheelajeet, kasturi, wool, ghee, carpets, honey, herbs, sohaga,

cloth and other items of hill industry. At Debi-dhura a mock fight scene was enacted after the best traditions of thok wars. The most colourful festival of Kumaon is Nanda Devi when figures of Nanda Devi are taken in procession round the city and ultimately immersed in some water tank.

### Rural economy

Often I am asked by inquisitive people about Kumaon economy and their means of subsistence, for which my usual answer is 'well', I am not a economist but being a Kumaoni who has extensive travel experience inside and outside Kumaon, I am of the opinion that Kumaon economy is based on the principle of scanty food supply for which every home sends at least one male member down to the 'desh' for service who sends money orders home. Women and remaining male members take care of the agriculture and cattle. The result of this balanced 'money order', economy is that today Kumaon throbs with lower middle class of people who eat well, live well and are contented with their lot.

### Road to prosperity

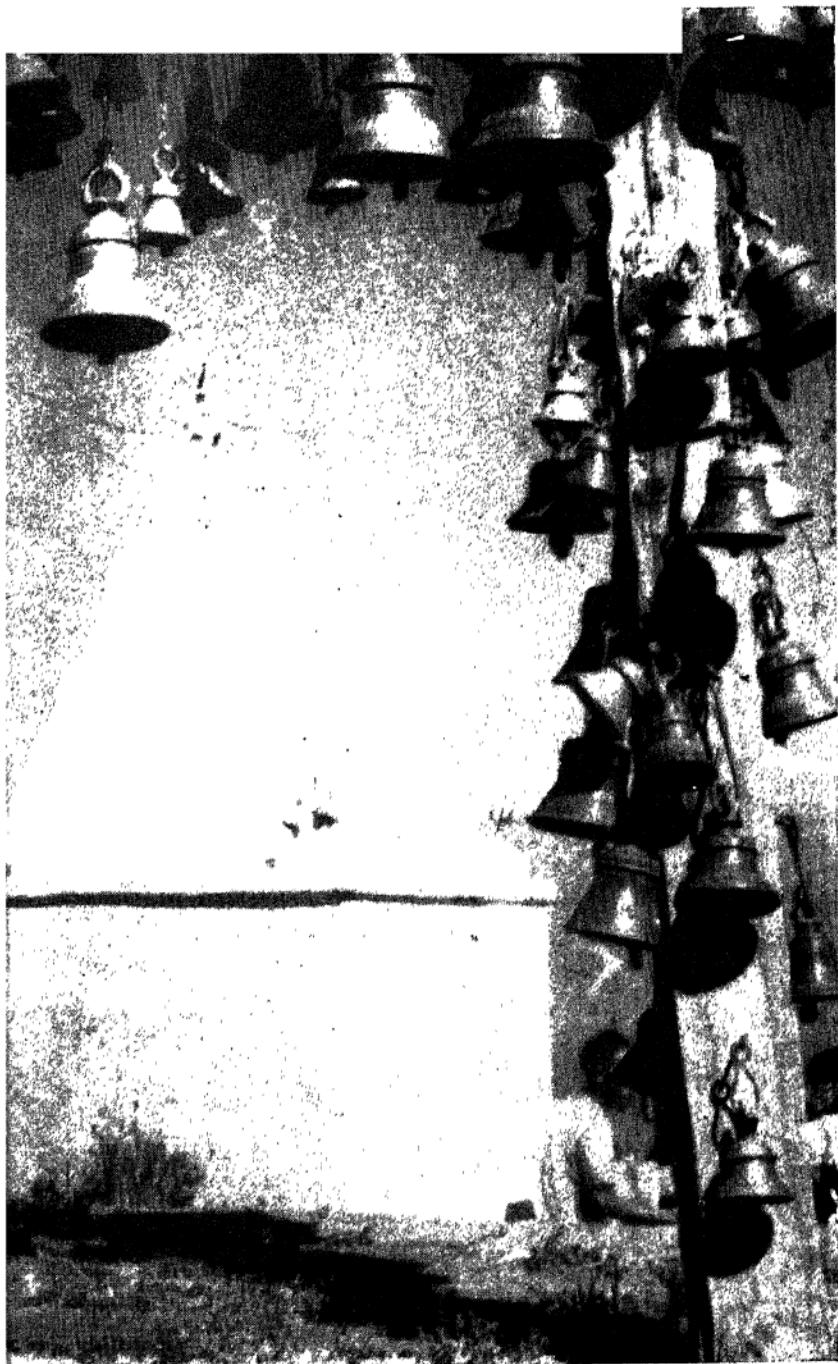
The backbone of Kumaon industry is its forest wealth and Kumaon had the privilege of producing the timber king of India—Dan Singh Bisht. Today forests are being exploited to capture timber markets and furniture industry. In order to further augment Kumaon industry, vast resources of hydel power are also being tapped in order to give Kumaon economy agro-industrial vent, with the increasing network of roads, the fruit gardening and apple orchards are also flourishing. Disposal of finished goods now hardly poses any problem, but on the other hand search for better land, milder climate, easier conditions of living and new prospects of advancement is drawing Kumaonese from their natural habitat to lower areas as a result of which village after village are becoming deserted in upper part of Kumaon and in turn a new agro-industrial area is fast developing in Tarai which once used to be a thickly wooded land infested with wild animals. Today simple Kumaoni farmer is handling sophisticated farm machinery alongwith the Panjabis and retired servicemen under the guidance of Pant Agricultural University, Rudrapur

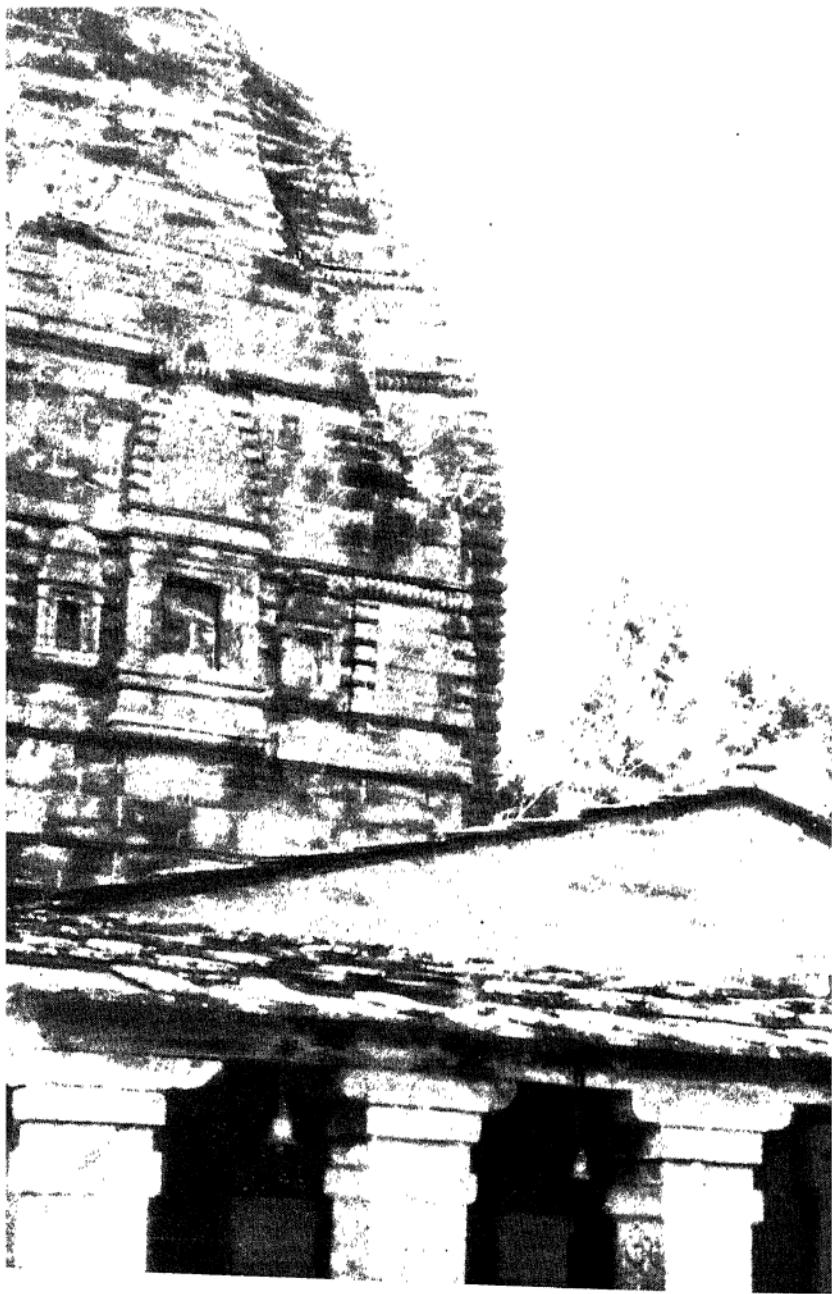
which is playing significant role in this area.

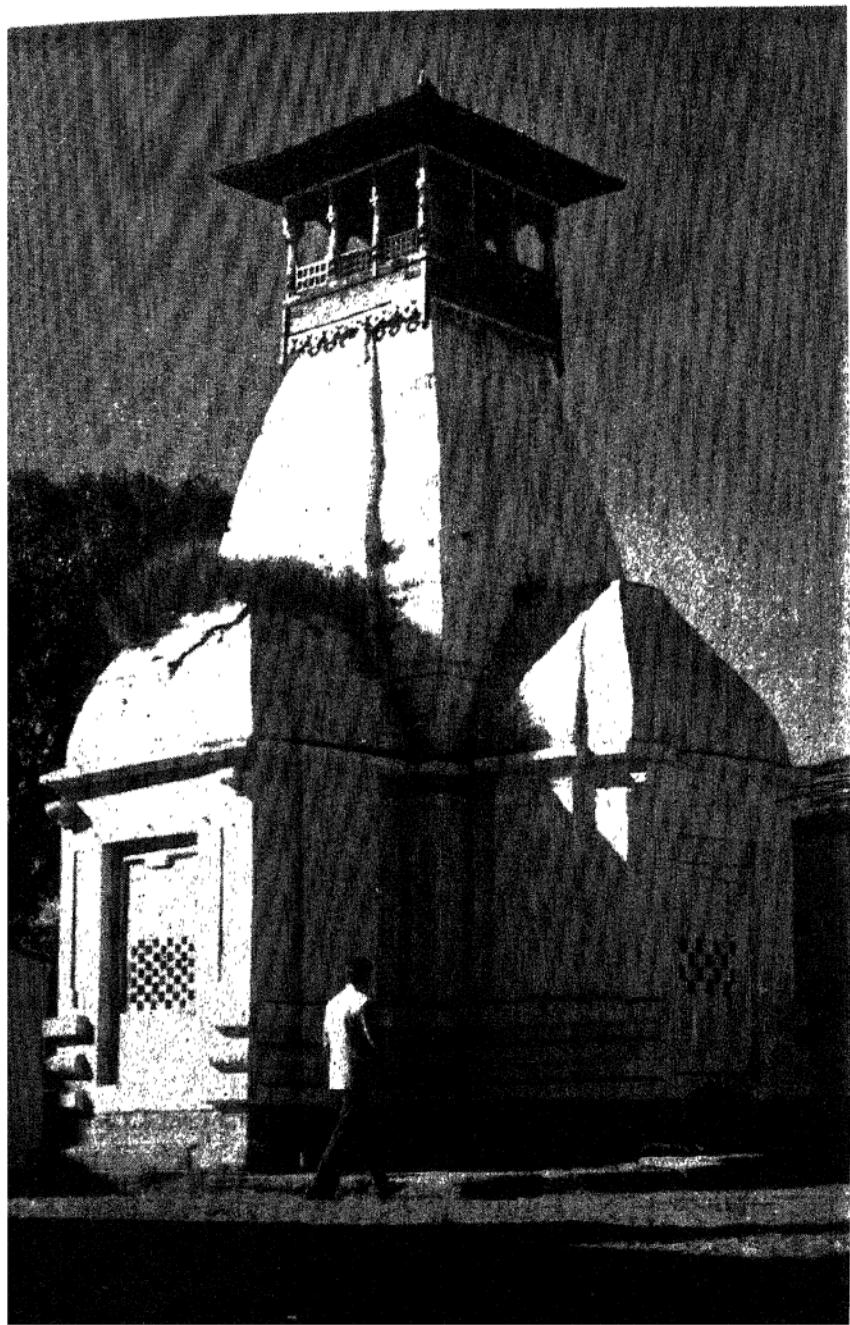
Economic advancement has brought in its wake desire for a separate hill state, although Kumaonese had no political aspirations beyond national liberation through freedom struggle, but with the advancement in the economic condition and in harmony with the current inquisitive tendency they have also started asking for separate hill state. Some prominent Kumaonese have formed a hill state front. Whatever may be the motives behind this movement, an average Kumaonese remains sensitive, intelligent, hardy, honest and basically a mountaineer who mends shattered dreams with his delightful behaviour and frankness.

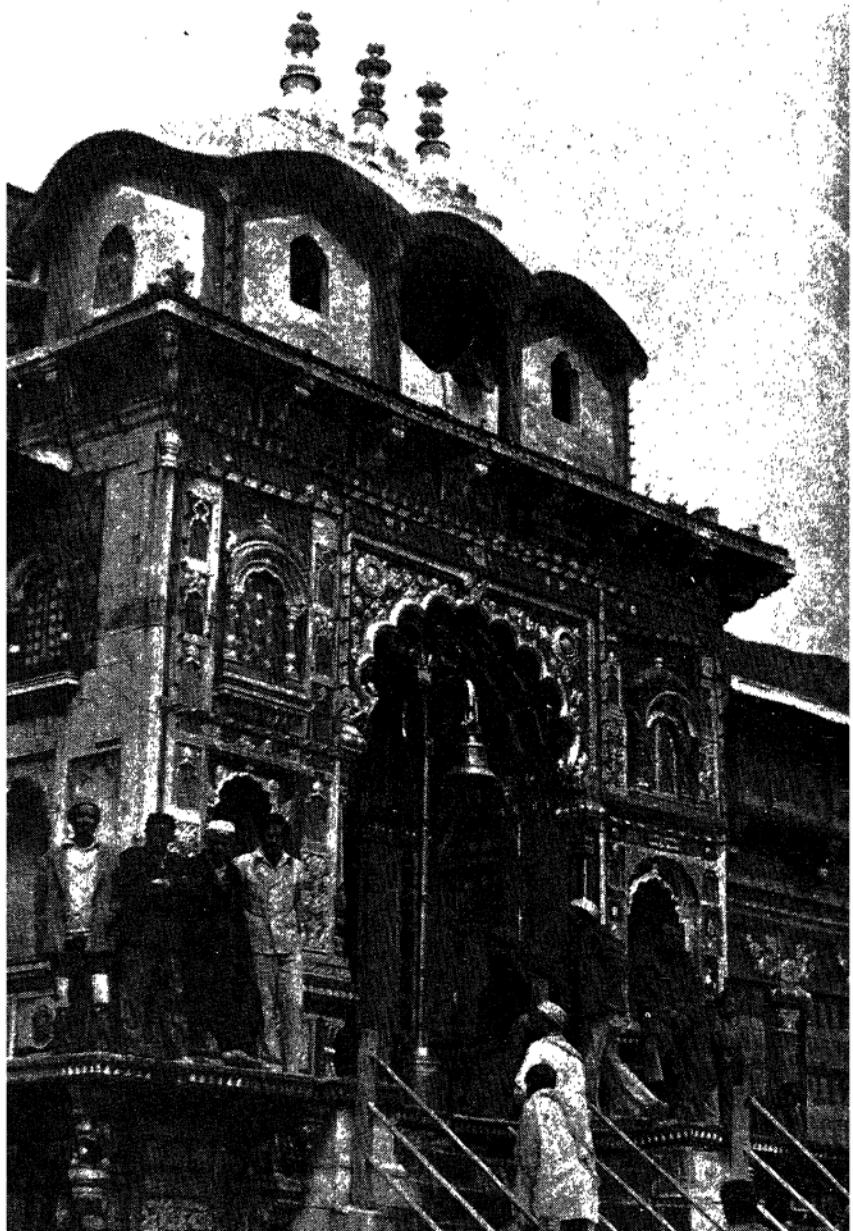
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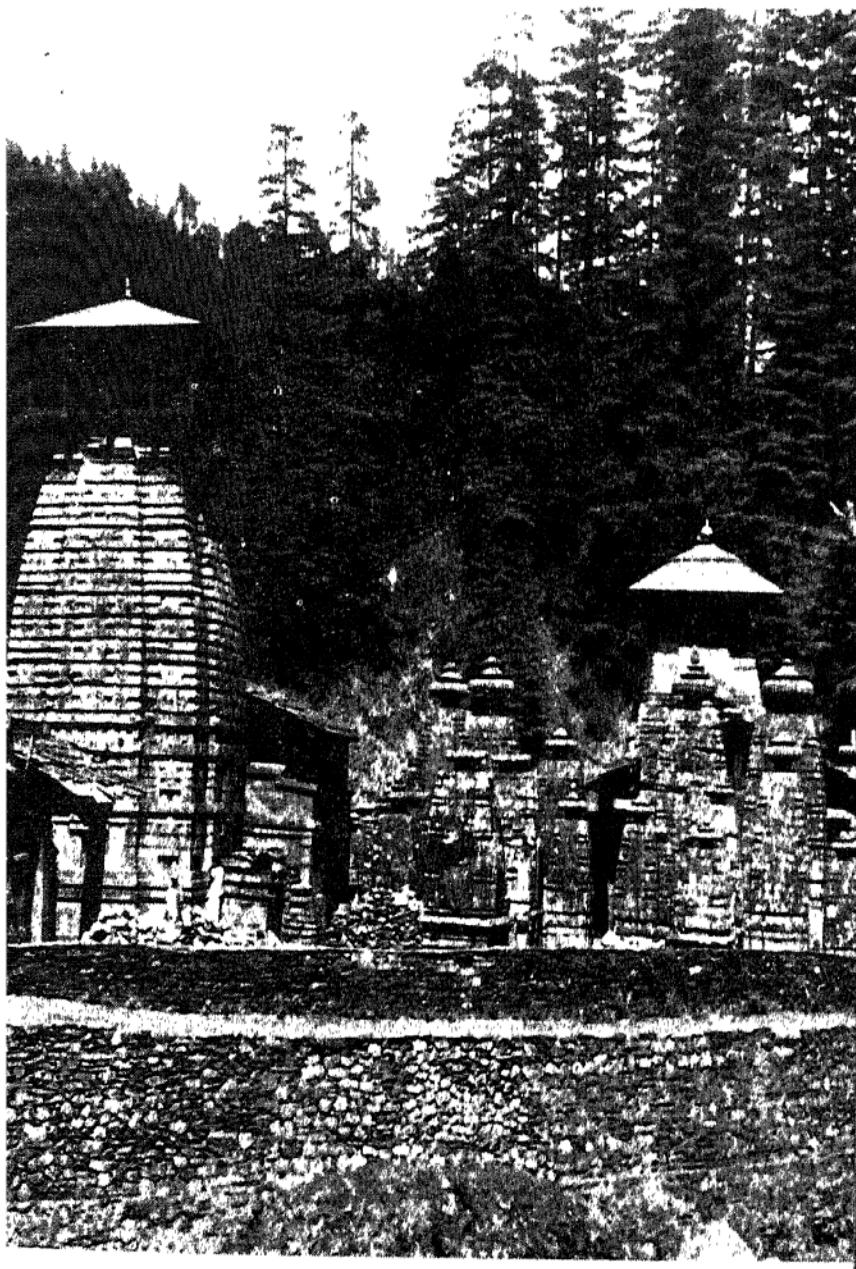


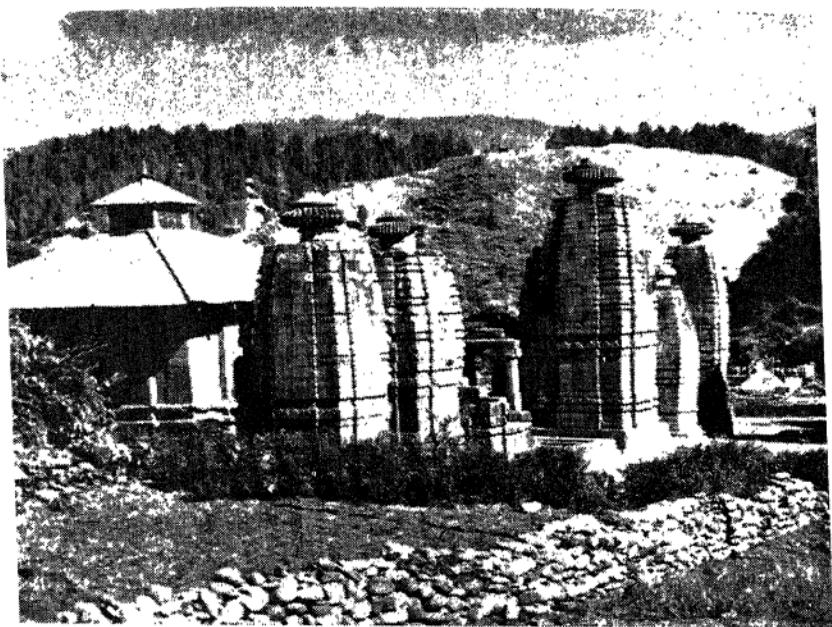


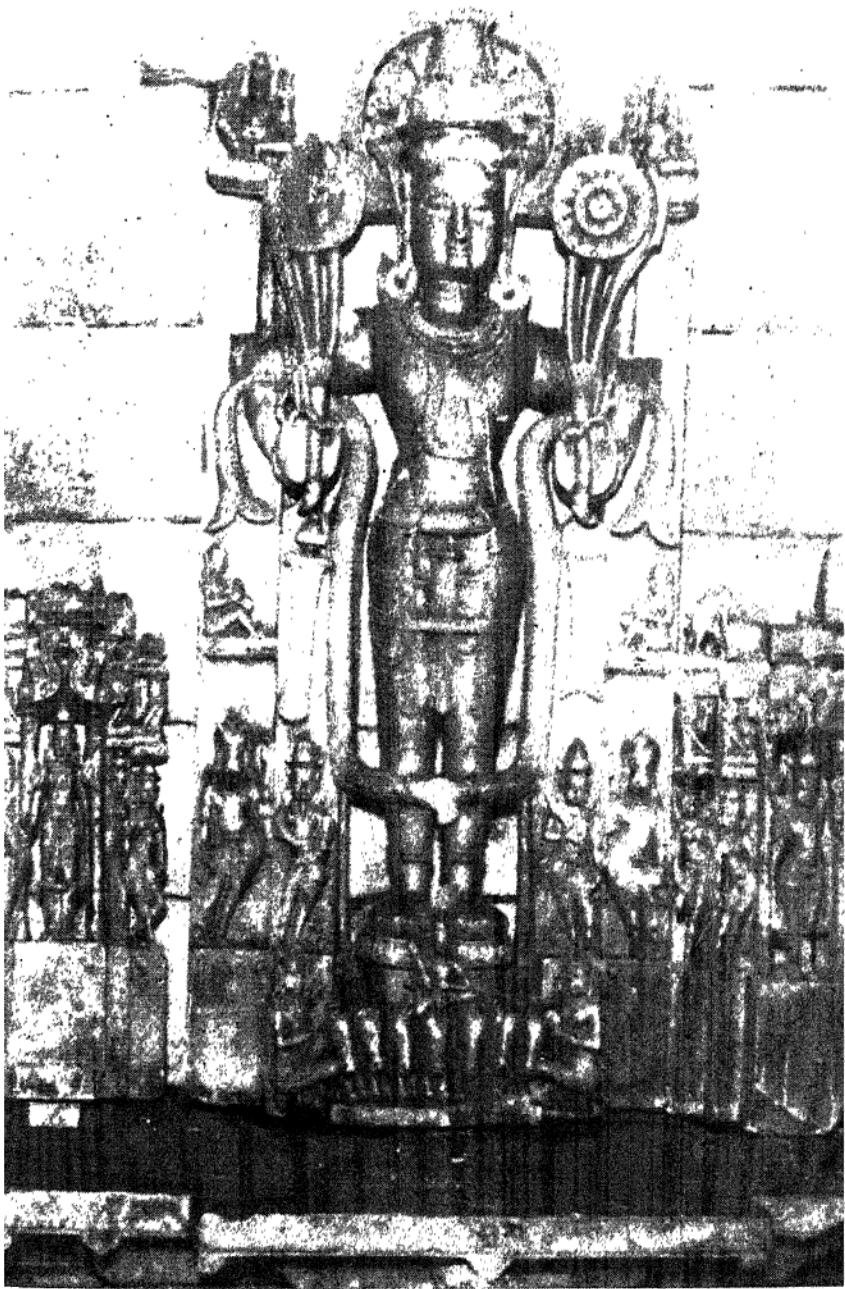


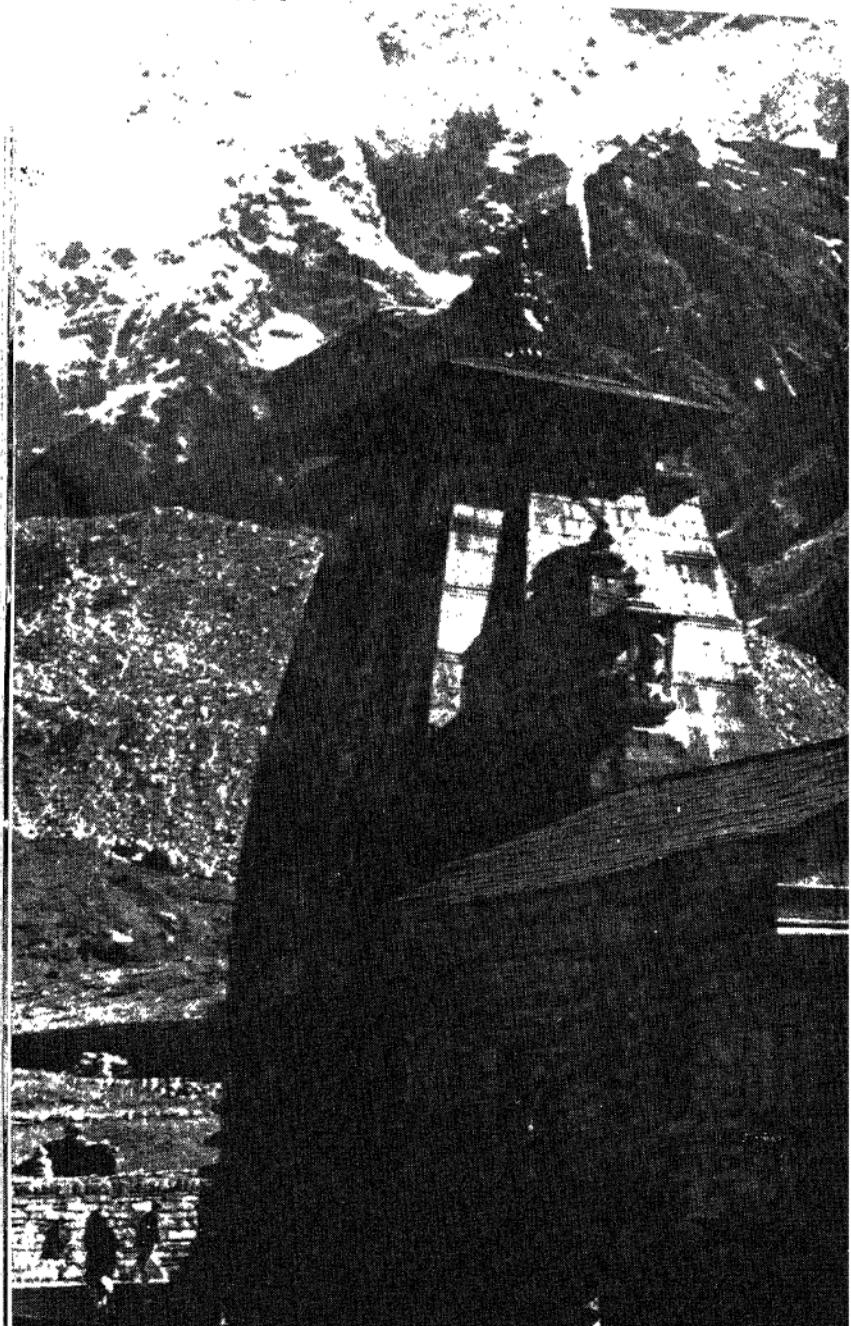


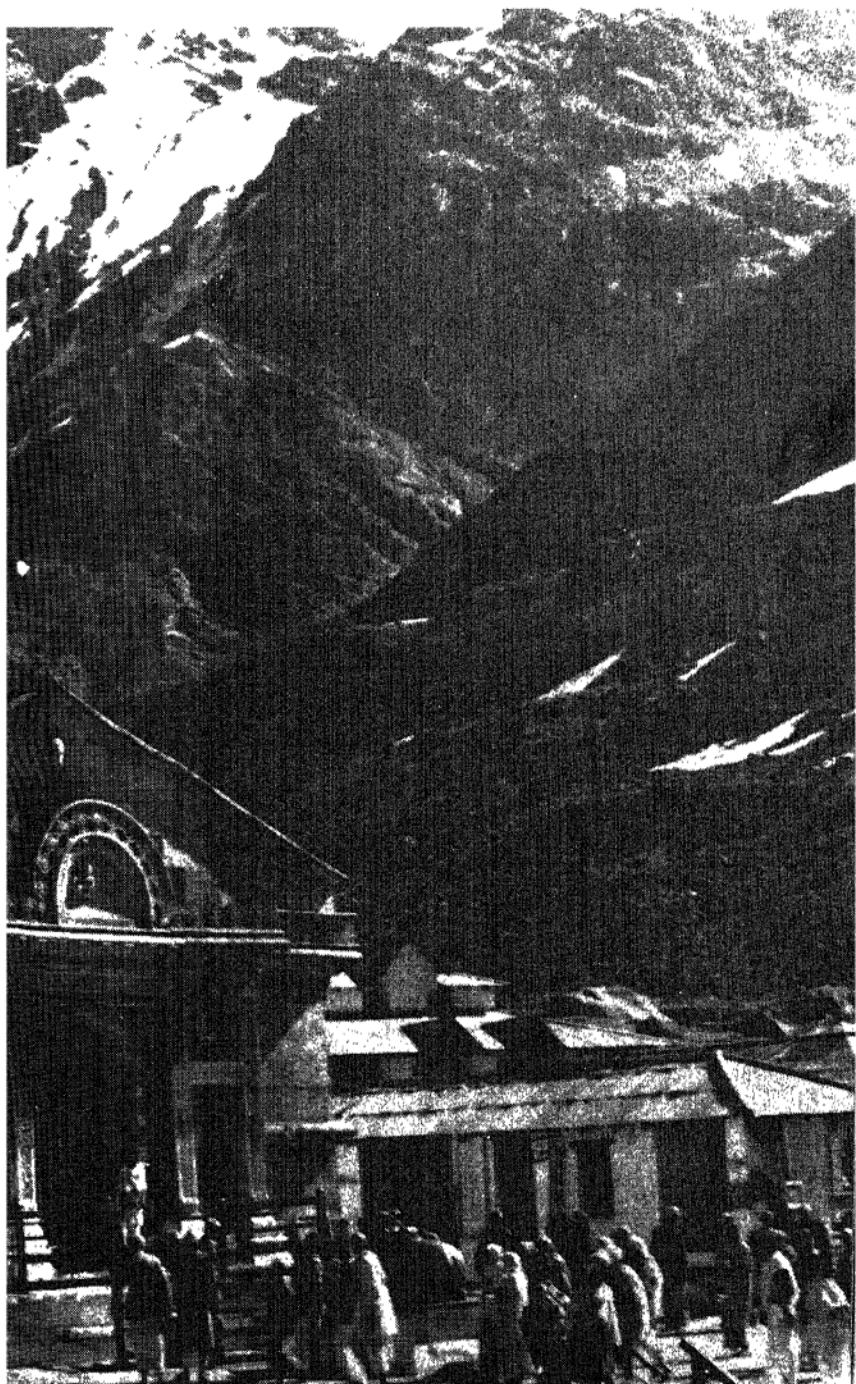














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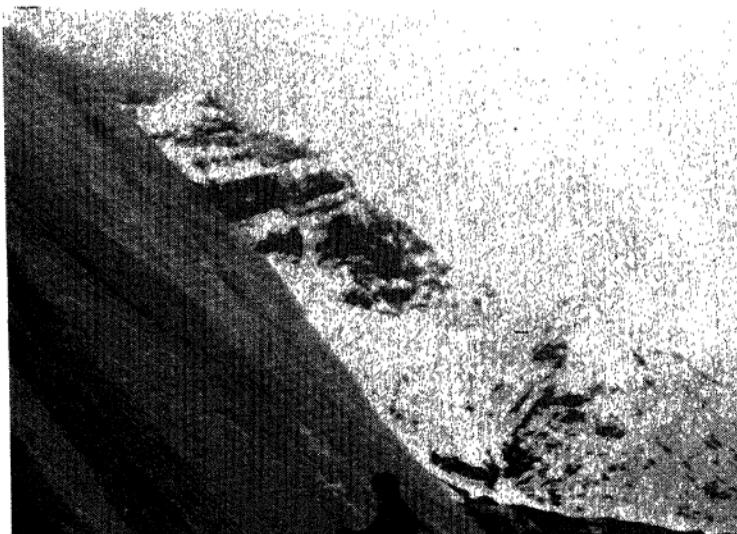


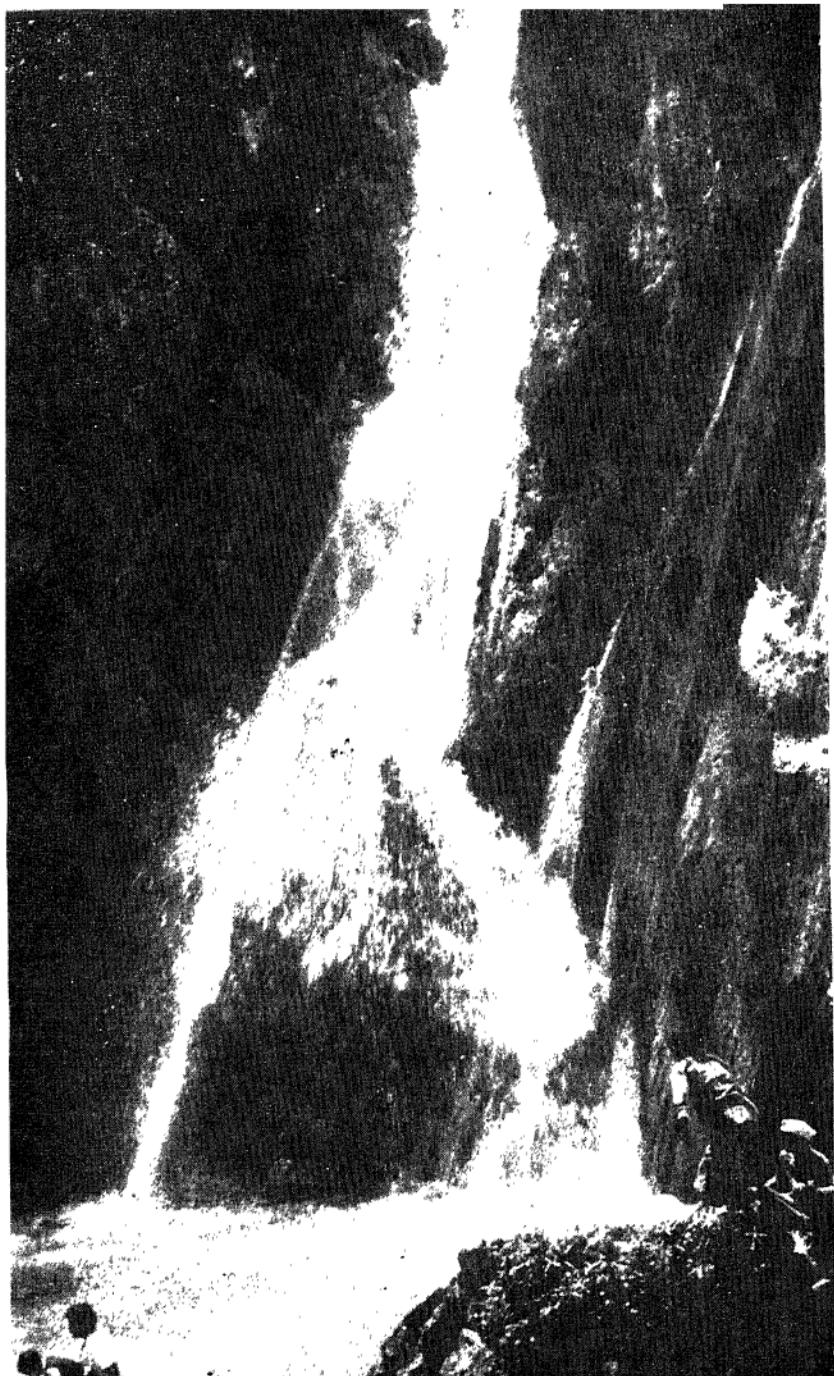


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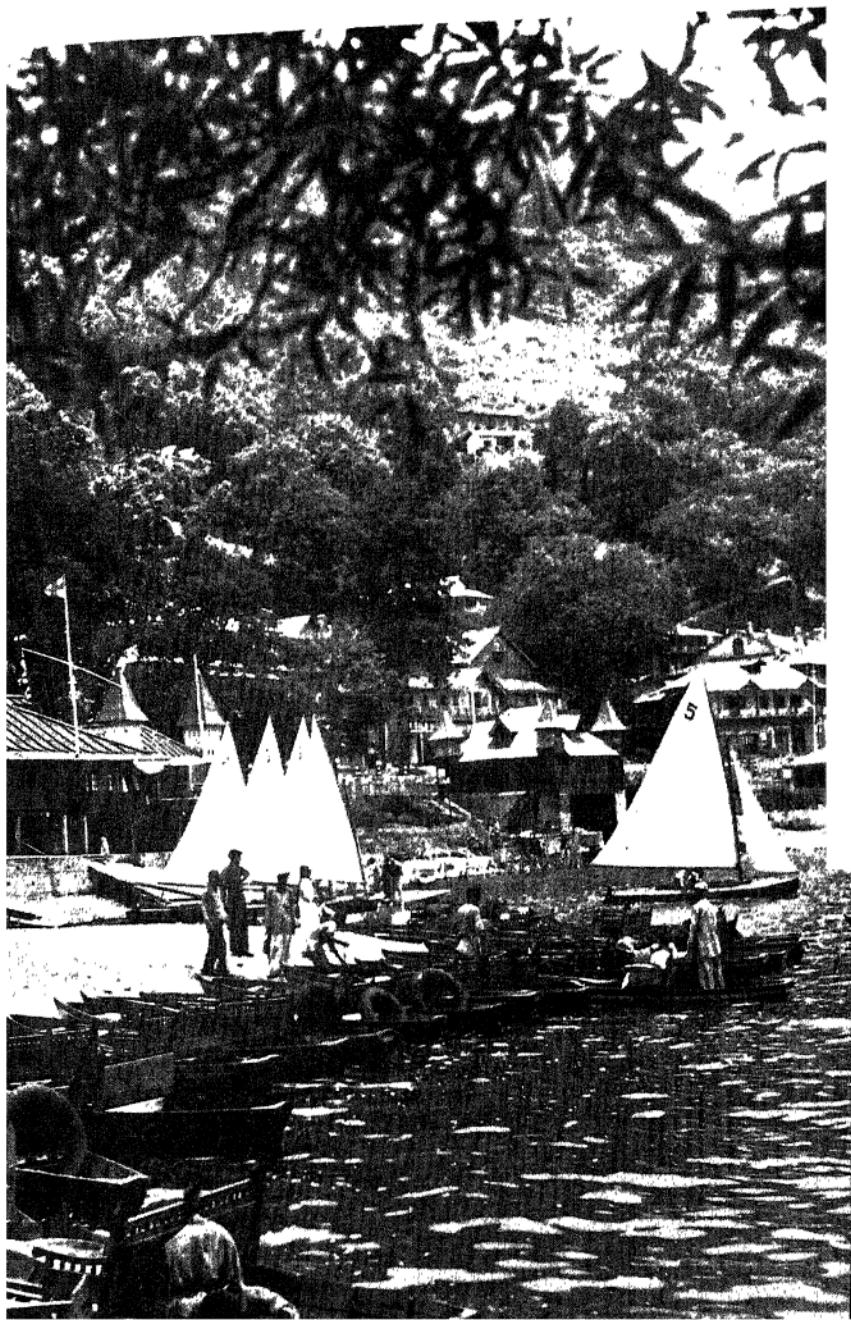


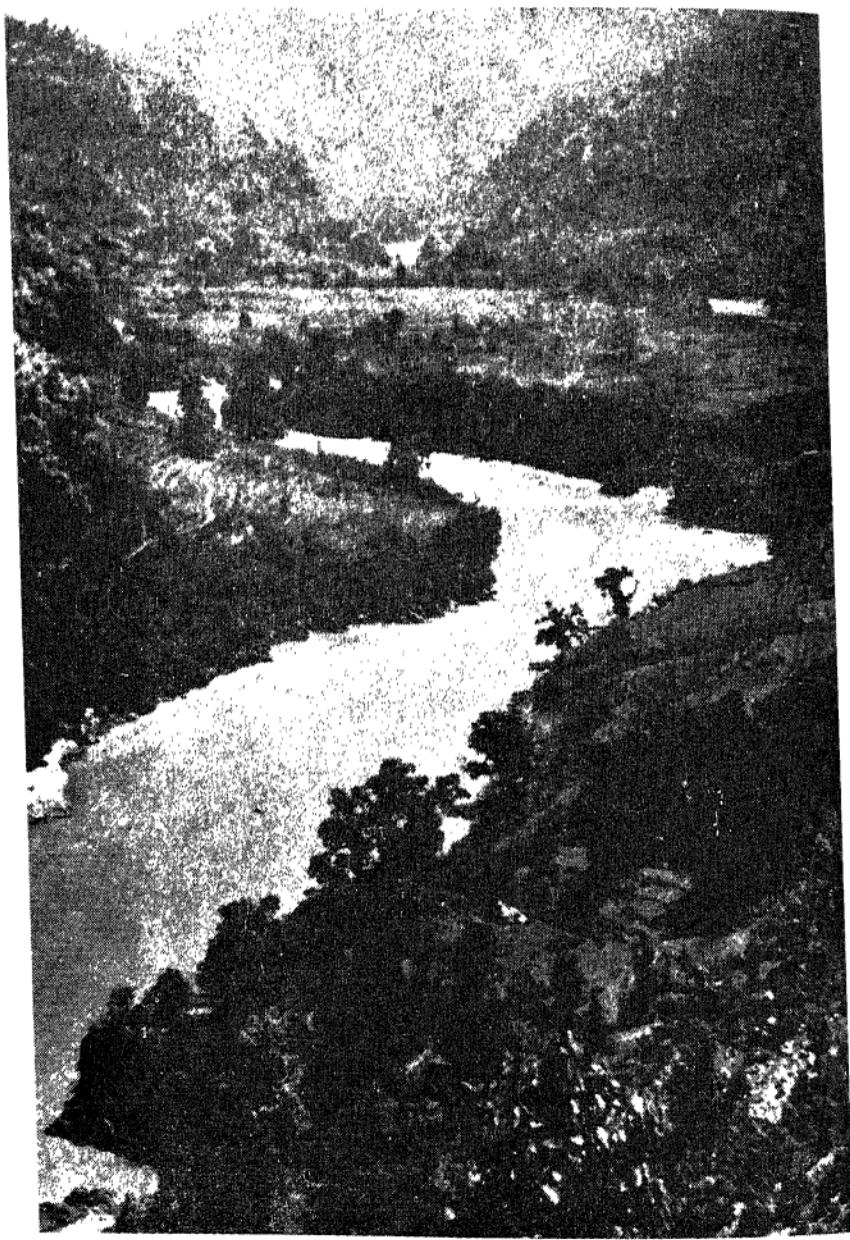
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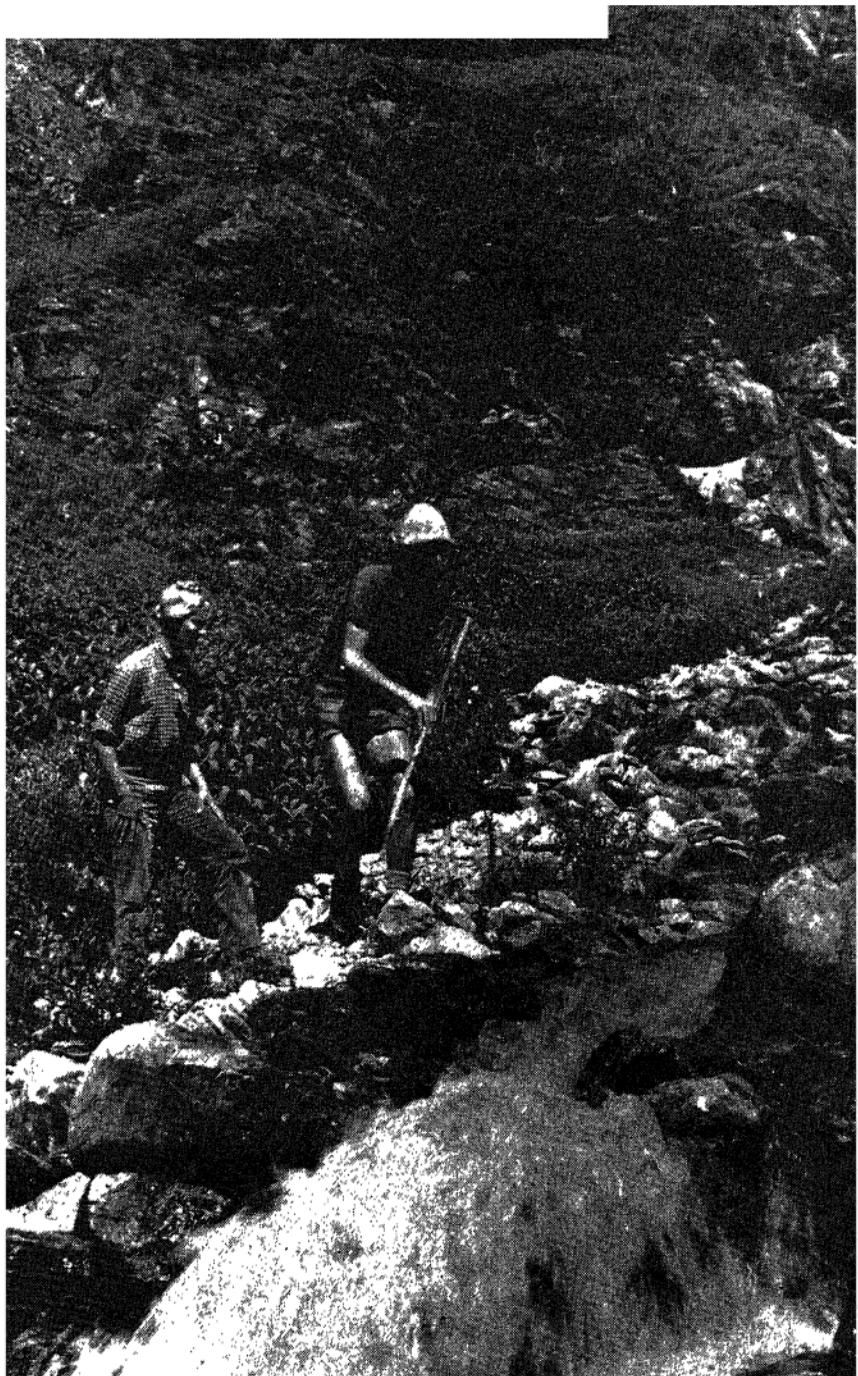














## SVARGAROHAN—THE EXPEDITION TO HEAVEN

Himalayas have been described in Skandpurana as “He who thinks of Himachal, though he should not behold him, is greater than he who performs all worship in Kashi (Banaras). In a hundred ages of the gods I could not tell of the glories of Himachal. As the dew is dried up by the morning sun, so are the sins of mankind by the sight of Himachal.” The five sons of Pandu, retired to die amidst Himalayas. Walking in single file, clothed in dresses of bark, accompanied by their common wife Draupadi and followed by their faithful dog, they ascended the mountain path of Painkhanda. Their names and traditions of their wonderful deeds are still preserved in the names of many places. Here they were visited by Krishna himself, who is said to have performed penance at another time on the great Gandhmadhan Parvat, now known as Chaukhambha, which is so prominently visible from Almora and Ranikhet.

### **Abode of Gods**

The Kedarkhand has been truly described as the abode of Gods because it is full of numerous shrines and holy places, whose fame and efficacy is described in Skandpurana and other scriptures. Indeed, that precious collection of marvels has a special

section or chapter devoted to this region. Parvati, the wife of Shiva is presented in many a scripture as conversing with her spouse, Mahadeo that 'What are the fruits of visiting a particular sacred place and bathing at a specific river bank'. Mahadeo answers, "The place that you have spoken of, O Goddess, is peculiarly dear to me because Brahma and other Gods are there; though his sins were so great as can be imagined, the virtue that accrues from a visit to Kedar is sufficient to cleanse them." In proof of this sin cleaning potency of the region sacred to Mahadeo, stories are related of great sinners whose crimes were absolved by visiting it, even though involuntarily, a crow, for example, carried the bone of a deceased sinner, and dropped it there, whereupon the man's soul, though he had been guilty of the most flagrant crimes, was borne to heaven, and all his sins were forgiven. This factor alone has counted for driving the devoted pilgrims to visit holy *dhams* for deliverance of the self and family.

Even today as the pilgrim approaches the snow clad heights with bated breath, he believes himself in the presence of divinity.

### **The route**

The opportunity to visit the abode of Gods—Holy Badrinath—came in 1968 when I was asked to take over the Joshimath Sector of the Special Police Force for a brief spell of one month. Charged with intense desire to see the holy land, I left from Moradabad by road which gave me an opportunity of seeing the picturesque greenery of the Tarai Bhaber, as I progressed along the Moradabad-Kotdwara road passing through places like Kanth, Dhampur, Nagina and Nazibabad rolled one after another. As the evening fell I was in Kotdwara. I halted there. This small town is the nerve centre of trade activity for the Garhwal hills and is the source of supplies of various articles of daily use and regular consumption. Kotdwara is also last railway terminal, being connected through meter gauge with the Nazibabad. In 1892, the Oudh-Rohilkhand Railway which was running between Saharanpur-Mugalsarai extended a branch line upto Kotdwara.

### **Step into Garhwal**

From Kotdwara to Pauri, the route passes through Dogadda from where one road bifurcates to Lansdowne which is a famed

hill resort and houses the Garhwal Regiment Centre which was raised here in 1815 and in 1890 it was named after Lord Lansdowne; I had an opportunity of visiting this picturesque hill town as far back as 1945, when we came here from Nainital as part of my maternal uncle's marriage party by train upto Kotedwara and from there moved upto Lansdowne in small buses. The old reflections are still in mind but I have not been able to visit Lansdowne again.

The other places of interest are connected with military traditions. From the marble view point, one can see the famed peaks of Nanda Khat, Trishul, Nanda Devi, Dunagiri, Nilkantha, Badrinath and Kedarnath.

### Hill resort

Pauri is the headquarters of the Garhwal District. Once it was the headquarters of unified Pauri District where it controlled both Chamoli and Pauri Garhwal. The Commissioners and D. I. G. Police headquarters are also here. Pauri presents magnificent view of the Himalayan range. There are blue ranges one behind the other and in between the snow clad mountains and Pauri, there is nothing to obstruct the grand view.

### The seat of power

Next we landed at Srinagar which lies on the bank of Alaknanda. The view from the ridge while descending to Srinagar valley is wonderful. Another picturesque view of Srinagar is from the Kirtinagar P. W. D. Inspection House. I am not aware how many times I have viewed this beauteous scene with intense admiration. It is just unforgettable. The Ganga near Srinagar normally remains enveloped in fog about which a story is told narrating the escapades of Dhaurya Rishi.

Srinagar has been the seat of Panwar kings since Ajaipal who moved in here from Chandpurgarhi. The tradition narrates that Sankracharya also halted here and liberated this place from the tantric spell of Sri Yantra. He threw it in the river. This small riverside town has seen many ups and downs during Kumaonese attacks and Gurkha plunderings. The town was badly mauled and damaged during the flood ravages of 1830 and 1970.

In fact the grandeur and magnificence of old Srinagar is now visible only through the paintings of Maula Ram who lived in the court of Panwar kings. Besides being a gifted poet and painter he was also a versatile writer. He wrote *Chandrodaya Kavya* which gives deep insight into the functioning of the Himalayan Kingdom and the tales of its friendlines, feud, dissensions and wars with its neighbours.

Srinagar has also been a centre of intense religious and political activity because of Kesoraya Math and other traditional houses. Today Srinagar is seat of Garhwal University.

### **The Tiger of Rudraprayag**

From Srinagar onwards the journey to Rudraprayag passes all along the Alaknanda. Rudraprayag is 30 kilometers from Srinagar and a little before it lies the spot where Jim Corbett shot his kill, the Tiger of Rudraprayag.

On this very spot  
                was killed  
The man eating leopard  
                of  
Rudra Prayag  
                by  
**JIM CORBETT**  
On 1 May 1926 at 10 p.m.

At Rudraprayag Mandakini meets Alaknanda after descending down the slopes of Kedarnath valley. A motor road passes all along it up to Gaurikund from where foot journey to Kedarnath starts which has been described elsewhere in this book.

### **The Pindar Valley**

Karanprayag is 30 km. from Rudraprayag. It is situated on the confluence of Alaknanda and Pindar. From here one motor route bifurcates towards Katyur Valley all along the Pindar up to Gwaldam (6000 ft.) which lies at a distance of 66 kms. and from where Baijnath is further 18 kilometers. From Garur one route goes to Kausani-Almora and another to Bageshwar and further. Gwaldam presents a magnificent view of the Trisul group of peaks. From here one trek leads towards Rupkund

where remains of a party of pilgrims which went on a pilgrimage are still found, scattered all over the place.

Another route from Karanprayag goes to Gairsen, Pandukhal, and Dwarahat to Ranikhet passing through Simli, Chandpurgarhi and Adi Badri. The remains of ancient temples which lie at Simli and Adri Badri are famed pieces of ancient Indian architecture and sculpture. Although only few remains of the past grandeur are available, yet the sculptures inside the temple are gorgeous in majesty and beauty. The Shiva Parvati forms have been carved out with perfect ease and precision.

### The Trident of Gopeshwar

From Karanprayag, some 20 kms. ahead is Nandprayag where Mandakini meets Alaknanda. It is a small town full of activity. A little ahead is Chamoli, the Tehsil headquarters of the Chamoli district Tehsil. At a distance of 10 kms. on the rocky hill terrain is located the District headquarters of the Chamoli district at Gopeshwar which also houses probably the oldest temple of Garhwal. It is huge in dimensions, magnificent in execution, perfect in style and abundant with the beauteous sculptures which adorn the temple. But the most significant feature of the temple is the famed trident which declares "The illustrious prince Aneka Malla having extended his conquest on all sides, brought together upon the spot sacred Mahadeva, under the emblem of a pillar, the very sovereign of the world whom his powers had overcome and thus having re-established this same pillar of victory, he acquired reputation. It is a pious act to raise up a worthy foe where he has been humbled." Thus runs the inscription in the trident. Aneka Malla was probably a Nepalese king who invaded the interiors of Kedarkhand around 1200 A. D.

I stayed in Gopeshwar for nearly three years. I still remember many memorable incidents of my stay over there. It was only there that I could learn much about Garhwal and the history of Uttarakhand.

### **Joshimath—the gateway to Holy Dham**

From Chamoli Joshimath is only 54 km. but the journey is over precipitous rock faces, scree and deep winding valley. The

motor road provides thrilling ride over dangerous mountain faces, except upto Pipalkoti, the road is even and the surroundings pleasant. In this eventful journey the most horrifying place is Belakutchi where in the year 1970, 28 buses were washed away with some of the passengers. Only few could escape to tell the horrifying tale.

A place called Helong lies deep in the gorge of Alaknanda. From here one route proceeds towards Urgam valley where Kalpeshwar and Dhyan Badri are located. Lord Badrinath chose this place for meditation, hence known as Dhyan Badri. It is really very beautiful valley. You only need to go into it and see for yourself the many splendoured beauty of the valley. As we leave Helong, the dangerous curves and climbs start and pass through Vriddha Badari (old/original Badrinath).

Joshimath is an ancient town of significant historical value. It was once the kingdom of Katyuri Kings and was renowned as Katripura. It houses ancient temple of Vasudeva and Narsimha. As per legendary accounts, Vasudeva temple was very high and in course of time it gave way due to earthquakes and ravages of nature but some of the sculptures which still adorn this temple are unparalleled in details of exquisite ornate-ments, beauty and dignity of human body. The lips and eyes are so pure, simple and serene that they inspire the feeling of a living god before the devotee.

Here lives the old Rawal, whom I met quite frequently and learnt from him so many things about the Holy Badrinath.

As per traditions, Jyotirmath is the seat of Lord Narsingha whose deity is worshipped during winter by Sri Badrinarayan, since times immemorial. Here Sankracharya meditated under a tree. The light of knowledge descended upon him. He established here one of the four Maths of his order now called Joshimath. These Maths (houses of religion) were to become centre of all religious activity for the Sanatana (eternal) Hindu Dharma.

Joshimath today occupies pivoted position and holds key to the Indo-Tibetan borderland. In fact, since ages, it has been centre of cultural exchange, therefore, the local population is of mixed blending, mainly consisting of local cultivators, families of Bhotias, priests of Badrinath, traders drawn from locals,

Kumaon and Kotedwar. The semi-pastoral, nomadic, Bhotia people are drawn during winter from Doti and upper valleys to Joshimath, Chinka (near Chamoli), Maithana (near Nandprayag) and other lower areas when heavy snowfall envelops upper approaches of the valley.

Joshimath grows abundant apples of delicious variety.

Joshimath is the headquarters of Painphanda sub-division and is divided into two patwari circles Malla and Talla, which comprise mostly of high mountains. Joshimath forms the central point from where one route stretches towards the abode of Gods—Mana—and the valley of Flowers and another road proceeds via Tapovan where there used to be hot springs and further to Bhavishya Badri, (future Badrinath) temple which lies amidst thick Deodar forest from where route goes to Nanda Devi sanctuary. The motorable road goes upto Malari and again from there upto Barahoti and Niti valleys. I had immense opportunity of visiting these valleys not once but number of times, which I shall describe separately.

Joshimath has immense potentialities of developing into an ideal hill resort particularly because of Kunwari pass (12000 ft.), Auli Bugyal (pasture) valley of flowers and Hemkund-Lokpal. Auli and Kunwari pass provide a magnificent window into the picturesque sanctuary of Nanda Devi. These places are also developing as ideal skiing resort.

Joshimath as centre of trekking sojourns is an idyllic resort. I have memories of many a nostalgic trekking days when we started from Joshimath for various trekking routes and had so much of nights out and days rest on the marshy grass of Bugyals.

Joshimath is the embarking place for onward journey to the abode of Gods— Badrinathdham and Nanda Devi sanctuary.

### **The abode of Gods**

From Joshimath, Mana is only 46 km. The road which leads to Badrinath descends down the perilous slopes of Sinhdwar right upto Vishnuprayag where Dhauli meets Alaknanda. The road takes a sudden sharp bend and moves towards Govindghat from where a foot trek leads towards Hemkund-Lokpal and the valley of flowers. Before reaching Badrinathdham, the devout Hindu

has a quick glimpse of Pandukeshwar, and Hanumanchatti. At Hanumanchatti sheer rock faces pierce straight into the sky. The road climbs from Hanumanchatti to Badrinath through hairpin bends. The awe-stricken trekker looks out of the moving bus window with bated breath.

### **Deo-Dekhni—the first darshan of the Dham**

The first view of the Holy Dham is visible from Deo-Dekhni from where we could see the golden roofed temple in the shining background of snow-capped peaks. As we proceed further and get down from vehicles, we have a full view of the golden roofed temple in the shining background of Neelkhanth (21,639 ft.) which penetrates deep into the sky with its captivating beauty and majesty forming reverse map of India.

The Hindu scriptures record different names of Badrinath through the ages : in Satyug, it was Muktiprada or the land of salvation; during Treta, Yogasiddna or the bestower of Yogic attainment; during Dwapar, it was known as Manibhadara Ashram after the name of king Vishal. The present name Badri is derived from Badri tree which grows in abundance here.

In Mahabharata, it has been narrated that Vishnu assumed four forms—Nar, Narayana, Krishna and Hari. Nar and Narayana went to the Badrikashram to perform *tapasya* for the good of the world and mankind. As per the version of Narayana portions of the Shantiparva of the epic, Narada went to Badrinath and wished to know the identity of the Yogis who were leading austere life. The yogis advised Narada to proceed to the sveta-dweep in Ksheer Sagara. Narada went there and found that Nar and Narayan were only forms of Vishnu. He returned to Badrikashram and spent there many years.

### **The legend**

According to legendary accounts, the first person to reach and settle in this place was Dharma Rishi, son of Lord Brahma. His wife Moorti was the wife of Daksha Prajapati. Here they did penance to propitiate the creator who blessed them with two sons, Nar and Narayan, after whose names the twin peaks Nar (19210 ft.) and Narayan (19750 ft.) stand on either side of the temple. Since time immemorial, faithful Hindus have endea-

voured to cross the high and perilous mountains, particularly in those days when there was no well laid out trek. Out of these early trekkers one was Ved Vyasa who settled near Mana and wrote famed epic Mahabharata and Skandpurana after extensive survey of the Himalayas.

Here, there is a thermal spring which gives forth thick smoke or steam, of a strong sulphurous smell, and the water is so hot as to be scarcely endurable to the touch.

The temple has a 'Taptikund'. Though Sankracharya arrived on the scene quite late but he made his mark as an ardent exponent of eternal (Sanatana) Hinduism. When he arrived at Badrinath, he learnt that the original idol of Badrinarayana had been thrown in the nearby Taptkund (hot spring) by the infidels, most probably Buddhists. He retrieved the idol and installed it at its rightful place and thus laid the foundation of Chaturdham (fourth house of religion), the other three being at Jagannathpuri, Rameshwaram and Dwarikapuri. Thus Sankracharya gave to India the idea of socio-religious unity which has always been a driving force behind Indian political framework.

The hot spring is so hot that cold water has to be mixed before we could take a bath in it. The idol inside the temple is formed of black stone which is locally designated as Saligram. It is usually clothed with rich gold brocade, and above its head is a small mirror which reflects the objects from the outside. In front are several lamps always burning, one of which is Akhand Jyoti—which burns round the year, to the right over the images of Nar and Narayan. As per traditions even today a good deal of ostentatious attention is paid to the personal comforts of the idol at Badri. It is daily provided with meals, which are placed before it, and the doors of sanctuary are then closed and the idol is left to consume its meals in solitude and quietness. The doors continue to be closed and are opened at sunset and later the bed of Lord Badrinath is prepared by the attendants, the doors are again closed until morning. A large number of devoted Brahmin attendants look after the temple beside the Rawal.

### **The institution of Rawali**

Eve since the installation of this Dham the opening and closing ceremony of this temple is performed by the Rawals who

are Namboodri Brahmans from the Malabar. When the head priest opens the kapat (doors) of the holy temple in the month of May after winter lull, hundreds of dedicated devotees stand outside in shivering and biting cold after having taken bath in 192°F thermal spring—Taptikund—which is just below the temple. After the opening of the temple, Srinagar, *bhoga* and *Nirvana Puja* is done day in and day out by the Rawal with the help of a team of other assistants who do various odd jobs. When the temple is closed in November, the image is bathed and then covered with aromatic scents, ghee, sandal paste and a cloth is wrapped round it. A wick lamp is lighted with eighteen, sears of ghee which miraculously keeps on burning till the temple is opened in April-May after a lapse of six months.

An important part of Badrinathdham management is the institution of Rawal which was founded by Adi Sankracharya who established four maths and handed over the administration respectively to Swami Hastamalik of Dwarikapuri, Jagannathpuri to Swami Padampal, Rameshwaram to Swami Rameshwaram and Jyotimath to Swami Totaka. The rules governing the administration of these Maths were laid in a book called 'Mathanya'. From 1497 to 1776 nearly 21 Acharyas handled the administration of Badrikashram. However, the management of Sri Badrikashram passed in the hands of Maharaja of Tehri in eighteenth century. He was conferred with the title of 'Baland Badri' i.e. the living incarnation of Lord Badrinath. The selection of Rawal was made by the Maharaja of Tehri and Rajas of Travancore-Cochin. With the passage of time as the control of Rawal became weak the Rawal increased his independence and he was virtually Pops and Ceasar combined. From 1776 to 1893 A.D., 11 Rawals presided over the temple, the tenth Rawal, one Vasudeva fell in love with a Brahmin girl who came for the *Darshan* of the Lord Badrinath but got married to the Rawal. The matter went to the court in 1898 A.D. and as per the judgement of the court, the Rawal was given absolute power. In 1919, a manager was appointed in the person of Shaligram Vaisnauv in consultation with Rawal and Tehri state. In 1928, the Government of United Provinces appointed a Committee for investigating the religious matters of the Hindus of the province. The Committee consulted people from different walks of life and the deliberations

continued for almost a decade until it culminated in the passing of Badrinarayan Temple Act on 3 November 1939. Under Sec. 27 of the Act Shri Pratap Singh Chauhan was appointed special officer. At that time the temple was in a stage of complete mismanagement.

### **The architecture**

The existing temple was constructed over the old structures by Sri Baradacharya around the year 1920. The Sinh Dwar (entrance gate) was constructed separately over the previous structure. The entire structure is a unique blending of Rajasthanis, Moghal and Uttarakhand style. Today its place is being taken by a cement concrete structure which may not harmonise with the nature.

### **The holy land**

The holy temple of Badrinath has also been claimed by the Muslims as the Maqbara of Badruddin and the Buddhists identify the Shaligram Narayana figure as the Buddha. In fact, the majesty and magnitude of Badrinath has attracted other religions to lay a claim on the holy dham—truly the God is one.

There are five other temples of Badri known as Raj Badri; Yog Badri, Dhyan Badri, Narasinha Badri and Bhavishya Badri. Out of these, it is said about Bhavishya Badri in Skandpurana.

*'Prapte Kaliyuge dhire agamya bhawet' (that is, with the approach of Kaliyug the present Badrikashram will become unapproachable then Bhavishya Badri will be worshipped).*

The entire area in and around Badrinath is full of holy places which are associated with one or other mythological events of the legendary past. Two miles ahead of Badrinath is Mana which is inhabited by Marchas, as branch of Bhotiyas. Mata Moorti is located near Mana village. From here one trek leads to Vasudhara fall (400 ft.). It is said Pandavas traversed this route on their way to Svarga.

### **The Valley of Gods**

Another bridle path climbs all along the Saraswati towards Mana Pass (18200 ft.) through Arwa Valley. At a place called Ghastoli a trek from Gaumukh connects here after crossing Kalindi Khal. After Ghastoli, the ruggedness of the mountain is

replaced by smoothness of the towering snowy peaks. A little ahead is Rattakona from where Mana pass lies just above the Tara Glacier. At Rattakona, vision becomes dulled and each step becomes gasping and defiant due to airless heights. I made three trips to this place at different times and seasons of the year.

The twin peaks of Kedarnath and Badrinath rise at a distance of about ten miles apart, the former being 22853 ft. and the latter 22,401 ft. above sea level. Perhaps nowhere do the snowy summits appear grander than here. These places are visible from a few miles down the valley of the Mandakini, the two sharp peaks seem to pierce the very sky and the white battlements, with their enormous slopes of smooth and shining snow tower into the air in a wonderful manner. Travellers have dwelt enthusiastically on the scene. At the pilgrims feet, edging the beds of snow which the pilgrims have to traverse at intervals, grow a profusion of pale rose coloured auriculas and yellow primroses of delicious fragrance.

Strange sounds are also heard in that rarified atmosphere, the effect probably of distant avalanches and rendings of the ice and snows, but which superstition has fancied to be the voices of the Gods, assembled for sport or council. This is the abode of Gods.

## THE HOLY GANGA

*Bol Ganga Maiya Ki Jai*

श्रोत सामस्ति जान्हवी

'Among the rivers, I am the holy Ganga'. This is the dictum of Gita in the words of Lord Krishna.

There is no doubt that this portion of the Indian Himalayas owes much of its repute for sanctity to its beneficent characters, as the source of mighty Ganges and disperser of water to the thirsty plains below where water is prized because it gives life, rears agriculture and generates electricity. We can very well understand the fanciful legends which have grown up regarding the origin and nature of the Indian rivers and especially of the Ganges. The sources of the Ganges are the glaciers of the snowy range though the longest of its feeder takes rise beyond the first line of feeder, in the high ground between Bhot and the northerly ranges in Tibet, and burst through gorges of marvellous depth into the rocking hilly region of the Sub-Himalaya.

The Himalaya is the mountain lord. The father of lordly pair of daughters, fairest of the fair, Ganga whose waters cleanse and save, who roams at pleasure, fairest and free purging all sinners to the sea.

Garhwal is the birth place of twin holy rivers Ganga and Yamuna and Kumaon is the gathering place of all the waters of the sacred river. Sir William Hunter has paid this glowing tribute

to the Ganges, "Of all the great rivers on the surface of the globe, none can compare in sanctity with the Ganges, or mother Ganga as she is affectionately called by the devout Hindus. From her source in the Himalayas to her mouth in the Bay of Bengal, her banks are holy and grand. Each point of junction of her mainstream with a tributary has special claims to sanctity. Having legends hallow each part of her course and from the names of her tributaries and of the towns along her banks, a whole mythology might be built up to die and be buried as the river bank in the last wish of millions of Hindus." Ganga has been the most sacred of rivers, visited by the crowding myriads of India, who pray to her to have their sins washed away in her magic waters.

*Gangajal* has medicinal efficacies also. Akbar used to drink it daily.

### The legend

The mythological legend about Ganga-avtarani—'descent of Ganga'—forms the subject of many a ballads, folktales, stories and other interesting classical literature. As per narration available, Sagar, a descendent of Ikshavahu clan was the king of Ayodhya. He had two wives—Keshain and Sumati. He was issueless for several years; therefore, he performed several penances to please Rishi Bhrigu who granted his wish and blessed him with a son through Asmanjas and sixty thousand sons through Sumati. When the sons grew young they formed themselves into a strong army. The king decided to conquer the world for which Asvamedha Yajna was held. The young princes marched into Indra's territory who in order to teach them a lesson diverted the Asmedha horse towards Patal where Kapil Muni was meditating. The victorious princes, blinded by power entered Patal-lok and disturbed the sage who was in a trance. The Muni looked in anger and no sooner his eyes fell on the princes they were reduced into ashes. Sagar waited in vain for the return of his sons and when his patience broke down he sent his grandson Ansuman to find out the whereabouts. Ansuman was a patient investigator. At long last he found the cause of disappearance and the measure for the deliverance of his sixty thousand uncles. He returned to Ayodhya and narrated the incident. Sagar beseeched him to undertake the task of bringing down Ganga

from heaven but he failed. Ansuman's son Dilip also failed and ultimately the task fell on the shoulders of Bhagirath who succeeded in winning over Ganga to descend on earth but she feared the earth may not take her load, therefore, he will have to find out some solution. Brahma advised Bhagirath to please Lord Shiva, who alone was capable of receiving Ganga. Lord Shiva was propitiated who agreed to receive the Ganga. Ganga descended with full fury and majesty on mount Kailash but was caught in the golden tresses of Shiva. For many years Ganga remained in the Shiva's *Jata*. Bhagirath was tested to nerve-breaking patience. He again waited and finally Lord Shiva waked up to release Ganga. Thus Ganga gradually flowed out of Shiva's locks on the tenth day of the bright phase of the moon during Jyeshtha. It is an auspicious day called Shukla Dashami and is celebrated as Ganga Dussehra. Ganga emerged from Gaumukh to quench the thirst of millions but it was not the end of miseries because at Bhairanghoti, in her gay and gushing course Ganga washed away the offerings of Rishi Janhu. Janhu was obviously annoyed over the disturbance and in anger drank the Ganga. Bhagirath could only pray and ask for forgiveness. Jahnu agreed to release the Ganga from his thighs, hence Ganga is also known as Jahnavi. At long last Ganga reached Gangasagar to liberate the sins of Raja Sagar in the bay of Bengal, after meeting and merging with Yamuna at Prayag.

Not only the sons of Sagar were liberated through the efforts of Raja Bhagirath but millions of people who have lived and died all along the 2500 kilometer long and hundreds of kilometer wide banks of Ganga, also known as Bhagirathi have been nourished and nurtured. Countless persons have washed their sins.

### **The route—all along the Bhagirathi**

The route to Bhagirathi valley lies from muni-ki-reti (Rishikesh) to Gangotri through Narendranagar-Tehri-Uttarkashi all along the Ganga upto Deoprayag from where a route goes upto Tehri and another upto Srinagar.

Narendranagar was founded by Maharaja Narendra Shah who caused to be constructed a beautiful palace at Narendranagar in 1930. From Narendranagar we can always see the magnificent view of Himalayas and down below the Doon valley with its

glittering townships of Rishikesh, Haridwar and Mussoorie. Darker the night grander the view. From Narendranagar onwards lies Chamba (5,000 ft.) from where one route bifurcates towards Mussoorie (63 km.) via Dhanotli. Chamba presents magnificent view of the Banderpoonch range. Down below Chamba lies the sprawling township of Tehri which was once capital of the Panwar kings.

Tehri became the capital of Royal Garhwal after 1815 when Britishers had wrested Pauri Garhwal. Tehri is a doomed town. Here Bhilangna meets Bhagirathi and takes a sharp turn towards Deoprayag where it meets and merges with the Alaknanda. In recent times Tehri has come into light because of the gigantic dam which is under construction here. The entire city will be submerged under deep water. There is unfortunately lot of local resentment against this dam because this will mean dislocation of hundreds and thousands of families. Government has provided alternative site for them. From Tehri one route goes towards Kirtinagar and merges at Srinagar on the Badrinath route and another route goes towards Ghansali-Ghuttu and meets the main Rudraprayag Kedarnath route near Tilwara.

Life in Tehri-Garhwal district is much more difficult due to lack of forests, rocky terrain and shortage of rainfall as a result of which people are generally poor and population is scarce. As against this, Uttarkashi district is more green and prosperous due to fertile valley of the Bhagirathi and Yamuna.

### **Uttarkashi**

Puranas describe Uttarkashi as Varanasi that is situated between 'Varna' and 'Asi' rivers, hence the seat of Lord Shiva. It has been forecasted in the scriptures that when Varanasi will loss its religious sanctity, Uttarkashi will assume some importance. According to another story, the Kiratarjuna battle also took place here. As per Mahabharata "when Yudhistara was appointed heir apparent, Duryodhana formed a nefarious scheme for killing all the five sons of King Pandu. He (Yudhistara) with his brothers and mother, was induced to pay a visit to Varanavrata where a house of firewood and other inflammables material had been built for their residence." This house of firewood (Lakshagrah) was probably located at Barahat. The present Barahat has been referred

by Huen-Tsang as Brahmapur. Another important aspect of ancient history and mythology is the trident which stands erect at Vishwanath temple. While some writers point it out as the victory Trisul erected by Aneka Malla, some identify it as the trident used in Devasura Sangram, detailed description about which is found in Skandpurana, eulogising the Guhya kings of Bhanduk, or Bhattacharaka—the Gupta general exercising his sway over these areas cannot be ruled out. The base of this trident is made of copper, and the shaft is of brass about twelve foot long. Leaving aside conjectural history, we can study the translated version of the inscription.

Uttarkashi has many other interesting places to visit like the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering and Maneri-Bhali project site. There is also a Parshuram temple due to which Uttarkashi is given the ascription of Saumya-kashi which derives its name from the incident that Renuka, the wife of Jamadagni got enamoured of her brother-in-law Kartavirya. As Jamadagni visualised this through his *Divyadrishhti* (third eye) he asked his sons to behead their mother. None agreed to do this except Purshuram who did the job obediently. Jamdagni asked Purshuram to seek some boon. Purshuram asked for his mother's life.

### The road to Gangotri

The road to Gangotri passes through Maneri-Bhali where a big dam is coming up. The entire topography of the area has been given a complete overhauling. It is a feat of engineering that major water flow of the Bhagirathi has been turned and put inside a tunnel.

As we proceed further, we pass through Bhatwari, a small town-ship which is also Tehsil headquarters. From Bhatwari one trek leads to Kedar valley through Budha Kedar.

As we cross the ridge of Sukhi (9,000 ft.), we find ourselves confronted with a most picturesque valley called Harsil (8,400 ft.) Harsil is known for its old forest rest house (1,864 ft.) which was built by F. Wilson. He also planted an apple orchard. Mr. Wilson is also credited for the introduction of potatoes in this valley. He was the first to use river for the transportation of fallen wood and other wood. He masterminded systematic exploitation of the forest wealth.

From Harsil there is a trekking route to Simla in Himachal Pradesh. It goes all along Hari Ganga which is also known as Jalandhari Gad. This route was once quite in vogue.

### **Bol Ganga Maiya-ki-jai**

Leaving Harsil is no pleasure but since our destination is Gangotri and Gaumukh, we proceed on. A little ahead lies Dharali and Mukhwa, the twin villages on either side of the Bhagirathi. Walking through thick deodar forests, we now cross into an area of blue pine and spruce. At Jangla we cross Bhagirathi. Here the river seems to have cut deep gorges over the rocks which look like a thigh, hence Bhagirathi is known here as Jahnavi. A little ahead is Lanka. A huge bridge hanging hundreds of feet above the Jadh ganga has been constructed. One can see Jadh Ganga meeting and merging with Ganga. Formerly, this valley had to be walked on foot. Opposite Lanka is Bhairon Ghati. From Bhairon Ghati onwards, the whole environment changes. Everything seems crystal clear. There is no noise, no disturbance, no whim of whine of engines. There is perfect ease, calm and tranquility except for the shouts of *yatris* from different parts of India singing or shouting in unison 'Bol Ganga Maiya ki jai.'

Gangotri is at an altitude of 10,700 ft. At Gangotri, Kedar Ganga meets Bhagirathi. Gangotri is a small town. It has Tourist Rest House, Dharamsalas and ashrams of Sadhus. All basic amenities are available.

### **The source of Ganga**

Gangotri is designated as per legendary accounts as the source of river Ganges. A huge temple of Mother Goddess 'Ganga' has been constructed here which was remodeled by Amar Singh Thapa, the Nepalese General who held the belief that "By the practice of charity, the territory acquired in four generations may be preserved and, through the favour of God, our power and dominion may be still further extended."<sup>1</sup>

The temple built by Amar Singh was damaged by a rock fall which was subsequently repaired by the Raja of Jaipur. The existing temple is magnificent and spacious. The sanctum sanc-

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1. *Himalayan Districts*, p. 694.

torum is approximately six and a quarter meters square. In the centre is the icon of Ganga which is about half a meter high. A little lower are the images of Laxmi, Saraswati, Annapurna, Bhagirathi, Yamuna and Jahnavi. The Bhagirath shila (rock) on which Raja Bhagirathi meditated is below the temple where *shraddha* ceremony is performed and oblations are paid to the ancestors.

About hundred and fifty meters downstream is Gauri-kund where the Bhagirathi falls into a huge natural trough. It is believed that when Bhagirathi started flowing towards Patal, Lord Shiva intervened and checked. The entire site is awe-inspiring.

The system of *puja* and *archana* is quite interesting and reflects a great tradition.

There are some very good saints with whom I had many encounters particularly with the holy saint Swami Sharanandaji, Jalahari Baba and Swami Hansanand.

### Trek to Caumukh

From Gangotri, most of the pilgrims, who are physically fit and agile, proceed on onward journey to Gaumukh, Tapovan and very few cross the high mountainous pass and descend into Arwa valley on way to Holy Badrinath dham.

The route from Gangotri to Gaumukh is very pleasant. It has almost no climb. As we arrive at Bhujbas, a majestic view of Bhagirathi group of peaks confronts us. In one of my early journeys, we had a night halt at Chirbasa. Climbers have a big rock at Chirbasa where many rock-climbers find time to practice rappelling which is succeeded with campfire.

From Chirbasa we proceed to Bhujbasa where a saintly person has built a small hutment to the great relief of pilgrims.

In and around Bhujbasa bhojpatra or silver birch trees grow in abundance. The ancient *rishis* used to write even its thin bark. Bhojpatra is replaced by juniperous bush which grows in abundance. These are called Thalujari in local dialect. Growing about a feet and half in height, the bush spreads like a mesh forming a net. The oil content in its wood is quite high and it burns well.

Right from Bhujbasa, one can see the massive column of Shiv Ling rising high and opposite it lie the twin peaks of Bhagirathi,

and at the feet of these massive peaks lie the huge moraines on the sides of Gangotri glacier. At the feet of these gorgeous peaks is a snout, looking like the mouth of a cow from which Ganga comes out. Many devotees take bath here which sends shivers down the spine. The water is terribly cold.

I have been to Gaumukh number of times and have stayed there for number of days. Each experience has been different. Evenings in the Gaumukh are pleasant expereince. The setting sun converts peaks into molten gold which gradually changes into red, pink and finally steel grey. And soon moonlight eclipses the valley with the shine of silver. At this moment everything is so quiet and silent except for the sound of flowing river, breaking ice or occasional avalanches.

Here iternity walks in silence and time stops.

THE ASCENT ON THE SOURCES OF GANGA  
 “श्रोतप्तात्मि जान्हवी”

*Among the rivers, I am the holy Ganga.*  
 (Srimad—Bhagvadgita)

The Himalayas owe much of their sanctity to its antiquity as the source of mighty Ganges and magnificent Yamuna. Naturally, the sources of these holy rivers inspire many a brave people to hazard an expedition upto the source of Ganga. I had many occasions of undertaking such journeys some of which were of hazardous nature, nevertheless worth undertaking the risk. For the benefit of my readers some of the trekking experiences all along these rivers are narrated herein.

#### Tributary of Bhagirathi

The first river to meet, mix and mingle with river Bhagirathi while going near Gangotri is Kedar Ganga which comes from Kedar Bamak. While going for Bhagirathi expedition we halted at Gangotri and decided to go upstream Kedar Ganga. The trek was not treacherous and still a sense of awe envelops my mind when I recollect the memories of the hazardous journey we undertook. There was almost no track, no markings, nothing to hold on except sheer rock faces and down below the Kedar Ganga—one

mistake and we would be in the gorge. It was a life and death struggle. No sooner we crossed rock faces there was a long avalanche which had to be crossed. It was excessively slippery and no sooner one of our party members Thakur stepped out, he fell and slipped but as luck would have it, his fall was arrested by a bush and simultaneous use of the ice axe. We proceeded further and went for nearly nine kilometers upstream. It was a memorable trip up a valley. The views which we witnessed were stunning. We could see the Jigin group of peaks and other peaks rising above the glaciers and moreover Kedar Ganga could be seen oozing out of Kedarbamak.

### Todh Ganga

At Lanka Jadh Ganga meets Bhagirathi. It is a major tributary of Bhagirathi. For reaching upto the source of Jadh Ganga, we have to go up stream. The route is good except for initial dangerous path which lies over a huge rock face below which Jadh Ganga flows fiercely. But the human ingenuity has done miracles by driving iron bars over the rocks and putting wooden planks on them. It is known as Gartang Gallery.

From Lanka Nelong is 35 kilometers on foot with two halting places at Karcha and Dhumka. There is nothing to stay except a small log hut at Karcha. Opposite Dhumka lies the valley of Tibet which is known as Chaukgaliya. Nelong nestles in the lap of Nandi Parvat. The Jads follow Tibetan form of Buddhism, the traces of which can be found in the shape of fluttering flags and rotating wheels of *om mani padme aham*. Flags called 'tharchens' are nailed high up on poles to keep ghosts away. The most dreaded variety of them is 'Kolong'. From Nelong, there is a place called Naga from where one route bifurcates towards Nilapani from where one can cross into Himanchal or Tibet. The track is very dangerous.

Proceeding all along Jadh Ganga I have been right upto Jhelukhaga ridge and the pass. The route which Jadh Ganga takes and the area surrounding it is most beautiful except for some distance between Sonam and Pulamsandha. The entire route presents craggy appearance. The hill sides consist of conglomerates. The flowers which adorn the area form a carpet of choicest designs. The valley is also full of wild life. Wild Yak and Bharal are found

in plenty. I have seen Bharals in hundreds, negotiating sheer rock faces or crossing the ridges.

### Ascent on the sources of Ganga

From Gaumukh onwards, I have ventured journey on two occasions, one towards Tapovan and then undertaken an ascent on right shoulder of the Shivling, upto a height of 19,500 ft. The area beyond Gaumukh, after crossing the ridge, the entire scenery is exceptionally beautiful. There is a big even ground which is intersected with small streams and in the background of which lies magnificent peak of Shivling. A little ahead is Kedarnath dome, the climb to which consists of crossing big crevasses. We halted at Tapovan, in the lap of Shivling and had three memorable days of climbing there. The climb upto right shoulder of Shivling was a memorable feat. From the top we could glance on the other side of the valley and see magnificent range rising over Chaturangi Glacier.

### Ascent on Bhagirathi group of peaks

It was in the year 1968 when we marched quickly upto Harsil and from Gangotri to Gaumukh. At Gaumukh we had intensive training of ice and snow craft. We did scrambling on the rocks and enjoyed the evenings with campfire. After having fully acclimatised ourselves we proceeded determined onwards on our journey. The trek from Gaumukh to Nandan Van is very difficult. It lies over sheer rocks and huge boulders. While we walked and walked we had crossed Chaturangi and Rakta Varna Glacier. As we moved on, we saw Shivling and Kedarnath dome from different angles. The other peaks visible at close range were Karchha Kund, Chaukhamba, Bhagirathi sisters, Bharat Kuntay, Bhrigu Panth and numerous other peaks. We could see the vast plains of Tapovan which we crossed last year.

We halted at Nandan Van which was at a height of 15,000 ft. The colours and dramatic change from sunset to night and the appearance of noon which we viewed there is unforgettable. The wonderful moonrise behind the Bhagirathi can be put into words only by a celebrated poet, like Kalidas. Next morning, we got up early and left for Vasuki Tal. This part of the trek was easier

to negotiate. We reached Vasuki Tal (16,000 ft.) in the evening. The lake is beautiful. We could see pheasant and other birds here.

At Vasuki Tal we rested for two days for acclimatisation, climbing practice over snow and ferrying of goods upto higher camp I at 18,500 ft. It was a tiring job but good experience of climbing nearly 2500 ft. over thick sheet of snow and that too in a process of continuous climb. Ultimately, we established our camp I and halted there. It was terribly biting cold over there. Everything was frozen and night was full of chill, gale and snow storm was beating around our tent but fortunately for us the morning was pleasant and we started early about 6 a.m. for the ascent and acclimatisation. Next day we repeated the process. Maj Surat Singh was leading, the other members were Dr. Chaudhari, Thakur, Rawat, Jamil (Instructor), Suanglu (Instructor) Bhagwal and myself. I also led for nearly 500 feet at the initial stage of the climb. At about 11.00 a.m. we were at 20,000 ft. From here rocky ridge started which was very difficult to negotiate but fortunately for us Rawat took the lead. He showed immense reserves of energy. Progress was very slow. After four hours of climbing we could reach the top 21,365 ft. around 1500 hrs. It was the finest hour for us. We remained there for half an hour and had couple of quick photographs. It started snowing, therefore, soon we started descending down. Driven by excessive enthusiasm, I started descending down but soon lost control over myself as a result of which I slipped in an uncontrollable manner for a few hundred feet but as luck would have it, I arrested my fall and got a lease of life.

The return journey was eventful.

#### **The trek to the source of third river—Saraswati**

The third river which meets Ganga and Yamuna at the holy confluence (*Sangam*) of Allahabad is Saraswati about which various stories are narrated. River Saraswati originates from Tara Glacier below Mana Pass and meets Alaknanda below Nana village, thus it has a very short career but as per traditional accounts it goes underground over here and from here emerges again at the holy confluence (*Sangam*). I went three times all along the course of this river, which descends down Arwa Valley. The vegetation is scanty.

### Svargarohini—the source of Alaknanda

From Badrinath to Mana (11,000 ft.) is a well frequented route but from here goes a track over Bhim-Pul (bridge) towards Svargarohini on way to which falls the Basudhara (440 ft.) fall. A little beyond we can see the vast expanse of snow from where Alaknanda trickles out from the snout of a big glacier.

### The source of Dhauli Ganga

Leaving behind Joshimath, after climbing upto Baragaon, we started descending down and saw Tapovan. There was a hot spring also. From Tapovan a foot trek leads upto Bhavishya Badri which lies amidst thick deodar forest. As the road proceeds it passes through Lata from where one foot trek leads to difficult Nanda Devi sanctuary, trek to which is undertaken by the resolute types who always revel in adventure. Since our destination is the source of Ganga I shall take you further. After crossing Reni where Rishi Ganga from Nanda Devi sanctuary joins Dhauli, we land into Surahithota which is very picturesque. Moving all along Dhauli we reach Jumma from where Drona Giri is clearly visible. From Bhapkund there is a continuous climb over sheer rock faces till we reach Malari (10,000 ft.). Malari is the last village, except for few more villages in Niti valley. At Malari Girthi Ganga meets Dhauli.

Niti valley is picturesque. As we cross Dhauli over the rope bridge, we land near a village called Kailashpur. The entire route is covered with deodar, kail, blue pine, spruce and at higher ridges with bhojpatra. The valley is immensely beautiful. Quite frequently, we meet the Bhotia families carrying or going up. Bampa is very big village. It has an intermediate college, a hospital and other important government establishments. Another big village which lies in the lap of Dronagiri is Ghansali. The sunset scene which I saw there is memorable.

Niti is the last village. It lies a little ahead of Timmersen. Niti has many attractions to invite a visit to this place. From here one can cross into Barahoti after crossing Kala-Jhabar. The other attraction is Bimlas (14,500 ft.) hillock which overlooks a wide range of Himalayas.

Thus I have travelled through all the bylanes or valleys of Painkanda and Gahgotri where the tributaries of Ganga originate

and after brief career ultimately merge into the Bhagirathi and Alaknanda which in turn merge into one another at Deoprayag and then proceed on to Rishikesh, Haridwar, Allahabad and ultimately into the sea at Gangasagar.

## TREK TO THE VALLEY OF GODS—KEDARNATH

After leaving Rudraprayag, the bus moves all along the Mandakini. A little ahead is Talwari from where one route bifurcates towards Tehri, little further lies Agastya Muni. There are numerous historic places in and around Agastyamuni. One needs only time to investigate these places. From here, the route goes to Guptakashi via Kund from where one route bifurcates towards Okhimath. Okhimath is also famous because of the legend of Banasur and his daughter Usha's love for Aniruddha. Okhimath was once called Ushamath. Vishwanathji is worshipped at Guptakashi.

As we proceed further we have to cross Nala, Narayankoti, Rampur and Soneprayag. From Soneprayag one track goes to Trijugi Narayan. Each and every place is associated with some mythological incident. Now buses ply on to Gaurikund. In fact the entire valley is so beautiful about which Atkinson has rightly written "Nagpur will never be forgotten by those who have spent a day on the bank of Dioori Tal and it is Chandrashila where the visitor enjoys perfect freedom, as imposed, it travels far and wide on all sides, no hills to stand in its way, no angry clouds to mar its course, exuberent flowers make almost the whole of the way a veritable field of cloth of gold, yellow, blue and purple

flowers are met within wild plants. Lots of lilies, violets, daisies and tulips of different varieties, guggal, mamira, mitha-telia, salam-panja misri and other plants, exhaling exceedingly sweet scent and lovely Brahma-Kamal (lotus) with its clayx filled with fine icicles of frost, all these things make these mountains a pleasure garden of the Lord of earth and heaven.”

### **The foot trek from Gaurikund**

Travellers have dwelt enthusiastically at length, about the scene visible, particularly from a point a few miles down the valley of the Mandakini, the two sharp peaks seem to pierce the skies, and the white battlements with their enormous slopes of smooth and shining snow, tower into the air in a wonderful manner. At the pilgrim's feet edging the beds of snow which the pilgrim has to traverse at intervals, grow a profusion of pale rose coloured auriculas and yellow prim roses of delicious fragrance. He passes through primeval oak woods, the gnarled boughs of which are festooned with long white mass, thick ivy and beautiful festoons of creepers, which here and there are mingled great walnut, chestnut, maple and hazel trees. As he mounts the steep, the woods become thin and scanty, but their place is taken by roses and syringe bushes of powerful scent. So strong is the fragrance of flowers near the Rambara and Deo Dekhni when we near the border of eternal snow, that travellers have sometimes been completely so overwhelmed by it, and that combined with the rarity of the air, producing a feeling of faintness has no doubt contributed to the belief in the peculiar presence of the gods in such places. Some travellers in order to counter this depressing feeling fortify themselves with long quantities of peppers and cloves to eat. Such belief is further strengthened by the poet that due to rarified air and distant avalanches and rending of the ice and snow, but which superstition has fenced to the voice of the gods, assembled for sport and council.

### **Holy Dham**

Suddenly the pilgrim finds himself in the vale of Kedar encircled by high mountains clad in white. The Kedarnath is situated at 11,735 ft. between Gangotri and Mana Valley where below Mahapanth peak stands magnificent temple of Lord Kedarnath,

built of grey stones. The temple is dedicated to Sadasiva who fleeing from the Pandavas took refuge here in the form of a buffalo and finding himself hardpressed dived into the ground leaving the hinder parts on the surface which continue to be the subject of adoration.

The temple is finest piece of art and architecture, particularly when executed at that height where working season could be hardly three months. In fact, construction of the temple at that height is not only a feat of architecture but a marvel of human endeavour and ingenuity. Each time, I have visited this temple, more perplexed I have felt.

Shiva's ling is worshipped in the form of a phallic god. To propitiate this god people perform unheard of austerities. At Kedarnath people used to leap into death as an offering to Shiva from Kal-sila. The practice has since been stopped.

The sculptures which adorn the temple are unique blend of central Indian and Uttarakhand style. A huge Nandi has been carved out with great precision in sitting posture. The front portion of the temple is known as the garba-ghiha and at the rear is Sabha Bhavan. In the garba-griha, images of Kunti, Pandavas, Draupadi, Krishna and Ganapati have been carved on stones laid in the walls. The five-headed idol of Shiva is in the middle. There are the images of *avatars* on the main gate of the garba-griha. In the Sabha Bhawan, a triangular icon of impressive dimension covered by a canopy represents the hinder parts of divine buffalo form of Lord Shiva.

The construction of the temple, as per legendary accounts is attributed to Sankracharya but it is just a conjecture because the temple was obviously constructed much earlier. Some ascribe its construction to Ahilya Bai but we have no definite information about it except the fact that she visited the place and got the wooden roof repaired with coppers topping which has recently been repaired by the Birlas.

The temple is closed for winters on the first day of Kartika falling during October or November. It is normally closed about a week prior to the shrine of Badrinath and is also opened earlier in Vaisakha corresponding to the end of April or early May. During winter Kedar Puri is completely covered with snow the accumulation being about 2 to 5 meters high.

Some hundred feet above the valley is the source from which the river Mandakini takes rise. Its precipice is famous as Bhairva Jhamp or "leap" from which pilgrim used to throw themselves offering their lives to the god, until the practice was stopped by the British rulers. In former times, also, it was not uncommon thing for pilgrims to give up their being to Mahadeo by climbing up the snows until overcome by fatigue and cold, when they sank down to sleep and wake no more.

Nearly five kilometers ahead of the temple is Vasuki Tal.

### **The legend**

The whole tract of Kedar is full of shrines and holy places, whose fame and efficacy has been best described in the 'Skand-purana'. Indeed that precious collection of marvels has a special section or chapter devoted to this region. Parvati, the wife of Shiva or Mahadeo, represented as conversing with her spouse a frequent device of introduction in the Puranas and inquiring what are the fruits of visiting its sacred places and bathing in its waters. Mahadeo answers "The place you have spoken of, O Goddess, is peculiarly dear to me. Brahma and the other Gods are there, whoever dies there becomes one with Shiva. If any one desires salvation he shall find it there; though his sins were as great as can be imagined, the virtue that accrues from a visit to Kedar is sufficient to cleanse them." The Puranas are full of the narrations which describe the stories of great sinners whose crimes were absolved by visiting it, even though involuntarily. A crow, for example, carried the bone of a deceased inner, and dropped it there, whereupon the man's soul, though he had been guilty of the most flagrant crimes, was borne to heaven, and all his sins were forgiven. According to traditions, the water of Sailodah spring if applied to the eyes enables one to see even hidden treasure. Whatever may be the desire, if even once one visited and supplicated the Kedar through the priests he is bound to attain *Moksha*.

There are four other Kedar where other bodily parts of Lord Shiva are worshipped :

(i) The arms are worshipped at Tungnath which is 18 km. from Okhimath on the Kund-Gopeshwar road, situated at a height of 13000 ft. Here Ravana is said to have propitiated Lord

Shiva.

(ii) Thirdly Shiva's belly is worshipped at Madhyamaheshwar, which is 30 km. east of Kedarnath and 50 km. north of Okhimath. The Rajputs of Okhimath used to dedicate their first born daughter as the "Rani of Madhyamaheshwar". The temple has some of the best remnants of ancient sculptures.

(iii) The head and ears are worshipped at Kalpeshwar, near Joshimath in Urgam Valley.

(iv) Fifthly, Rudranath is situated just above Baitarini river at a distance of 31 km. from Gopeshwar. The climb to this place is very difficult but the views are stunning.

### **The Madhyamaheshwar**

On return from Kedarnath, one can always stop at Guptakashi and from here can undertake a journey upto Madhyamaheshwar via Kalimath. Kalimath has inherited some rich and rare sculptures from the ancient heritage.

From Kalimath one walks and walks upto a suitable place for night halt and makes it at some convenient time. From that place Madhyamaheshwar peak is only 10 km. ahead but the journey to this place is very difficult which makes it memorable. The views are fantastic. The sculptural pieces are extremely beautiful. One only needs to see them in person, in order to properly appreciate them.

### **Okhimath and the Rawals**

On return journey, I made a day's halt at Okhimath and visited the local temples which are managed by Jangam Rawals. The Rawal of Kedarnath resides at Okhimath during winters. The dwelling of Rawal is inside the Okhimath temple. It is a large square building with galleries surrounding a central court, and a "dewal" or a temple. Both he and his associates are always from Southern India, and belong to the sect of Nambudiris in Malayalam. Sankracharya brought them here from Kerala for the worship of Lord Kedarnath.

### **Dioorital**

Any description of Kedarnath valley will be incomplete without a mention of Dioorital which is situated at a height of 8000

ft. and at a distance of nearly 8 kilometer from Okhimath. The lake is about 390 meters long, 240 meters wide and upto 30 meters deep at some places. It has some good fish also. I visited it number of times.

#### **Okhimath-Gopeshwar road and the hillock of Tungnath**

I have travelled hundreds and thousands of miles through mountain road and through the length and breadth of India but I am yet to see a more captivating, fascinating and thrilling road which may provide stunning and grander views than those presented by the Okhimath-Gopeshwar road. It is a paradise drive on earth. Moreover, it provides *Darshan* of Jangannath.

Such is the pleasure of travelling in Kedarnath Valley.



## YAMUNOTRI VALLEY

Yamunotri shrine is situated at an altitude of 3,292 metres at a distance of 226 kilometres from Rishikesh. Yamunotri is famed as a source of Yamuna and also for its sulphur hot springs.

### The legend

Surya, the God of light, once saw a beautiful maiden and fell for her. Surya was now in a predicament since he could neither stop his daily rounds nor forget the beautiful lady. He started languishing which was reflected in his change of character and behaviour. Obviously this affected the Gods in heaven and men on earth because it could ruin their lives. The Gods deputed Vayu, the ruler of winds, to investigate. Vayu found that Surya had fallen in love with Sanjaina, the daughter of Viswakarma, the architect. Gods approached Viswakarma and requested to consent for the arranged marriage to which Viswakarma had no alternative but to accept. Surya and Sanjaina henceforward lived happily and soon Yamuna was born to them who is referred as Surya Kanya, the daughter of Surya or Surya-Tanaya. Two sons, Yama and Dharma Uog were also born from this marriage. With the passage of time when Sanjaina

got wearied of Surya, she requested Chhaya, her own shadow, to live with Surya and she herself reclined to the coolness of jungles. With the passage of time, Chhaya gave birth to Sani and Tapati. Chhaya started illtreating Yamuna and her brothers. Yamuna was very sensitive and loss of paternal care made her sick. She prayed to Brahma who advised her to descend to Mrityulok and relieve the people of their miseries and sufferings. Yamuna met her brothers before leaving for Mrityulok who gave her the boon that anyone, no matter what sins he committed, would attain *mukti* if he took bath at Yamunotri.

### **The route**

The shrine is situated on an altitude of 3,292 metres. The Yamunotri valley is separated from Uttarkashi valley by Rari-ka-dande (9,600 ft.), the highest parting point, from where one can look down into the picturesque Yamuna valley on the one side and Bhagirathi on the other side. The breathtaking view of setting sun behind the Rawain Jaunsar ranges, far in the west, shedding golden light behind the silvery clouds which shine like illuminated metal pieces as if flung in the sky to create an aura of littering objects round the setting sun. As the sun gradually grows red, they change their colour into colourful prisms.

As we descend down the valley, a sense of spaciousness envelops the visitor and when he touches Barakot he is embraced by most salubrious climate and fascinating view of Yamunotri valley underneath towering Banderpunchh peak. Barakot is the terminus of routes coming from the Dehradun—Moussorie—Dharashu—Barakot—Uttarkashi—Baraket—and Simla—Tuini—Natwar—Purola road (under construction). All these lead to only one place that is Sayana-chatti which is 29 km. ahead. From Sayana-chatti, the pilgrim has to walk upto Yamunotri, a distance of 20 km. Pilgrims normally make a halt at Beef (also known as Nanaki Chatti). Pandas of Yamunotri live in Kharsali village and till their land during slack season and winter. Yamunotri is only 7 km. from Beef and this part of the journey is very difficult due to steep climb. But when the panting and sweating pilgrim reaches Yamunotri (800) he forgets tiredness and other worldly worries and ultimately when he takes a dip in the holy Yamunotri, his sins are washed away altogether. In the 194°F

sulphur spring and icy Yamuna. The origin of these hot springs is traced from the Saptrishi. A handful of rice or some potatoes tied loosely in a piece of cloth is dipped in it, and after a while it is completely cooked. Above the sulphur springs is Yamunotri temple about which Tracer observed in 1915-18, "It is in fact very beyond the place where the various streams formed in the mountain brew by melting of masses of snow unite in one fall into a basin below."<sup>1</sup>

Yamunotri stands on the western bank of the great peak of Banderpunchh which is 4,421 metres above sea level. The peak is always snow clad and forms the watershed of Hanumanganga and Tons rivers. It is said that the sage Asit had his hermitage here and all his life he bathed daily in both the Yamuna and the Ganga. During his old age, when disability prevented him from going to Gangotri, a soft stream of Ganga emerged from the rocks before him at Yamunotri. The temple of Yamunaji is the main temple of worship. Close to the temple there are few hot water springs where the water gushes out of the mountain cavities at boiling point forming pools. Out of these pools, Suryakund is the most important pool. Near the Suryakund there is a rock called Divya Shila which is worshipped before *puja* is offered to Yamunaji.

On the other flank of the shrine is the majestic peak of Banderpunchh (20,731. ft.) which is the eternal source of Yamuna which flows down slenderly but as it descends down the mountain path, it grows in shape, size and spiritual content, till it meets and mingles holy Ganges in Sangam at Allahabad.

The Yamunotri valley is highly enchanting and captivates the heart of pilgrims.

### **The inhabitants**

There is absolutely no positive trace of history except a few references here and there. Thus far from the current of political upheavals, the inhabitants of this valley are full of joys of life, steeped in tradition and living amidst beauties of nature. These good-looking people lead a busy life carrying long cylindrical baskets to hold the wooden revolving spindle (*Takli*) and wool

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1. Paripoornanand Painuli, *A Tourist's View of the Valley of Gods*.

for spinning. Men and women often dance together in a big colourful circle in measured rhythmic stepping. Festivals present most colourful sight when women can be seen in their best attire giggling with innocent pleasure. Their men folk carry idols of gods in resplendant crimson palanquins which are preceded by the drummers and trumpeteers who tug flowers over their head-gear. Besides the Yamunotri valley along the Yamuna, there are smaller side valleys also, the most famous being Sarnole which I had an occasion to investigate and see its villages with their wooden houses and temples which presented an interesting phenomenon of ancient tradition and culture.

Trudging on, we reach the Yamunotri from where emanates Kalindi which cascades down the mountain slopes. There are few spots of such infinite beauty so near the civilisation as Yamunotri.

## JOURNEY INTO INTERIORS OF HIMALAYAS

In the year 1968 (November) my posting in the Special Police Force provided me an opportunity of entering the very interiors of Himalayas. In fact, I was very keen to visit Millam Glacier about which I had read and heard so much. I drove from Dhar-chula to Jauljibi, and after attending the Jauljibi fair at Jauljibi, I proceeded on my onward journey on my Jeep and after crossing through Askote, Didihat, Thal, Tejam, Girgaon, Kalamuni I ultimately arrived at Munsiyari.

**Sat sansar adhmunsiyar—half the world is equivalent to half of the Munsiyari**

Munsiyari is a small township. It is also a sub-divisional Magistrate's headquarters. The local inhabitants are known as Bhotiyas in general and Jauharis in particular. They have a migratory life, and have their homesteads at three places, viz., one in the upper reaches of the valley, one in and around Munsiyari and third one downwards in Kumaon. During summer months, these Bhotiyas live in upper reaches of the valley, in and around Millam and about September, they remove their family to the lower part of the valley. These Bhotias formerly traded with Tibet.

The deep cleft of the Goriganga, through which we pass on this route, really takes us beyond the great chain of snowy peaks into the tract on the farther side. At one point on the road, not far from the village of Martoli, a glorious view is obtained of Nanda Devi (25,600 ft.).

The whole stupendous mass of the mountains rises before the eyes, like a huge dome in the sky, where every single black rock jutting out of the snowy vesture clearly outlined, and the vast peak towering into mid heaven.

At Millam, the valley is wider, with the glacial river flowing at the bottom, and surrounded by high hills, some of which are crowned with snow, affording pasturage to a few flocks of hardy sheep. As we proceed ahead on the road to Millam the vegetation is very scanty, though potatoes are grown near the village. At Burphu and Tota, the Tibetan God Lamsal is worshipped. The people fell a large tree, and carrying it to an open space fix it in the ground and make it firm with three ropes. Strips of cloth with every description are then fastened to every portion. Near Millam flocks of white pigeons fly frequently.

### **Millam**

Millam is a village of stone huts. There are still some remnants of ancient workmanship, particularly on the wood. There are remains of an old fort also.

Millam glacier is very large. Here we met famous geologist, Mr. K. S. Waldia and party. We marched into Millam glacier and walked over the ice debris for considerable distance, till we arrived at the foot of the Hardeoyal peak.

### **Trek to Kingri Bingri**

From Millam we can go to Kingri-Bingri Pass (17,000 ft.) from where one can see the Mansarovar lake in Tibet.

I trekked from Millam to Dung over thick snow. I had to undertake one trip upto Dung (14,000 ft.). This strip was full of thrill, excessive risk and involved trekking over hazardous freshly fallen snow. In fact even the route from Millam to Dung was in utterly bad shape. Somehow, with great difficulty we reached Dung, carrying loads of ration for the jawans. It was a memorable trip over continuous sheet of snow for nearly 16 kilometres.

### The folktale

There is a pretty story told of the first advent of the Bhotias or Sekpas, into Johar, where they followed a people who had covered with hair even to their tongues. In those early days there lived a great bird of prey on the gori glacier, which daily fed on one of these hairy inhabitants, and by its ravages reduced their number to a mere handful. To free them from this curse a holy lama, who with his magic powers of flight used to fly to Lapthal and other places, sent his servant with a bow and arrow to kill the evil bird, and gave him for a guide a man who ever changed his form. This guide changed into the form of a dog, hence the pass Kingri-Bingri, the former word meaning a dog; then he became a stag, hence the name Pol Dunga; then a bear hence Topidhunga, then a camel, hence the pass of Unta Dhura; then a tiger, hence Dung-Udiyar; and finally a hare at Samgaon. Thus the route from India to Tibet was first shown, for until then there was no way known. The servant killed the bird of prey, but by this time all the hairy inhabitants were dead, and the servant, although wishing to make a colony there himself, denounced to do so owing to the want of salt. The holy Lama then took the salt and sowed it over the land like grain, sufficient to provide to this day and it so saturated with salt that there has never been any want for the Bhotia flocks. The lama then flew out of sight, but when Buddhist priests visit the valley they still ask for alms in the name of the lama who gave the people salt.

### Customs and cultural belief of Joharis

The residents of Johar were at one time completely out of the main current of Hindu culture, instead they were pursuing pastoral religion and culture which had its own pantheon of local Gods and Goddesses and they have a different version on the laws of propriety-impropriety, law of inheritance, adoption, woman's property and principles of adoption. The Hindu idea of a joint family was quite unfamiliar to them. The Bhotia father is the absolute owner of all family property including ancestral, and can mortgage on his own without reference to his sons, a state of things quite unknown to a Hindu. As regards child birth and other ceremonies the Joharis were at some vari-

ance with the Hindu customs but now they have taken to the traditional Hindu customary laws.

As is expected, we find that some of these Hinduised Bhotias still worship Tibetan deities, for instance the Nikhurpas worship the god Dhurma. This deity is specially sought after in the rainy season when the people have tired of a long spell of hot weather, and hope by propitiation of the god to effect a change in the prevailing climatic conditions. Two poles are fastened in the ground, to the top of one is fixed an iron or brass trident surmounted by a yak's tail, and to the top of the other an image of a man's head; throughout the ceremony of worship music is played and finally a goat is slaughtered. Meanwhile, the devotees are anxiously awaiting the moment when the god will manifest himself by taking possession of one of the throng. Suddenly some man is seized by the religious frenzy and rushing forward drinks the blood of the goat, and in this ecstatic state dances round the people, and finally climbing the pole which holds the idol he imprints a blood kiss on the mouth of the deity.

### **Migratory scenes**

One peculiar scene of course very interesting in the hills in general and in this valley in particular during winter is of large number of families moving down from the hills, with their families and household goods to the Bhabar. Some characteristic touches of the native life are to be observed. The wives of the men especially if they have passed their youth, are seen carrying fairly heavy loads and walking before or else behind their lords and masters, who never walk with them, but always at a little distance. This is the invariable etiquette.

Sometimes, women mounted on a mule or pony, seated usually on some portion of the household stuff. Chubby infants are also seen tied up and supported on the luggage animals, or seated astride of their father's or mother's side as the latter walk along.

A different class of traveller on this road of the same season of the year are the Bhotias from the snowy regions in the north of the province, bringing down their loads of wool, etc. to the depots, at the foot of the hills. They drive before them long strings of sheep and goats, each loaded with a double pannier of cloth (karboga) protected with leather. These traders use to

*Uttarakhand*

visit Tibet and the lower hills and plains, crossing the lofty passes of Johar and Darma.

The approach of these droves of Laden arrivals is announced by clouds of dust, by the peculiar whistling of the drivers, and by the noise of numerous little bells tied to the necks of the animals, the tinkling of which sounds pleasantly along the mountain road. These are some of the pleasures of a journey to the interiors of Himalayas which is worth undertaking.



## THE LAKE-TOWN NAINITAL

The hill station of Nainital takes its name from the lake, on the shore of which stands a temple of Goddess Naina Devi. The lake itself is situated at a height of 6,350 ft. in a circle of beautiful tree-clad mountains. It measures 1400 metre in length and 200 to 300 metre in width. The reflection of hill sites, dotted with cottages and buildings connected by enormous roads, is a pretty site by day. At night the twinkling lights on the roads and buildings are reflected as sparkling garlands on the still water of the lake. Round the lake is a beautiful promenade where hikers and riders can enjoy themselves and on the lake itself yachting, boating and swimming can be enjoyed to the full. The flats situated at one end of the lake, afforded ample space for sports and athletics. Some of the best All India Tournaments are held here. For the amusement seekers there are good cinemas, tennis, roller skating and a running drama hall. The gay socialite finds himself fully occupied in well-equipped clubs and a never ending round of parties, dance and entertainment in the Boat House Club.

The view of the eternal snow clad mountains from China peak, where a long cabin has been constructed for overnight stay is glorious. From the land's end, and Hanuman Gadi the view

stretches towards the deep green of the Tarai forests to the light green of the intensely cultivated fields.

This beautiful lake town came into being due to the efforts of an adventurous Englishman named Batton who visited Nainital in March 1839 while on a shoot at Haldwani with his brother-in-law Mr. P. Barron. Mr. Barron gave a vivid description of his find in 'Agra Akhbar' under the name of pilgrims. Barron visited Nainital again in December 1842. This time, he came via Bhimtal and brought with him a boat. Thus Nainital was put on the tourist map by this adventurous Englishman and thereafter, Nainital has never looked back. Today it is one of the gayest and most crowded hill stations.

### **The lake town**

The name of Nainital is well known to all classes of tourists but very few know the legend behind it which states that in ancient times it was known as Tri Rishi Sarovar. The legend goes that three of the seven Rishis, Atri, Pulsatya and Pulaha, came to Uttarakhand for a pilgrimage to Chitrasila. They meditated on top of a hill and after sometime when they looked down they saw that no water was available. They prayed to Brahma for water who filled the valley down below with water. Thus a lake came into being which later on became the abode of Narayani Devi who is supposed to live in the bottom of the lake.

After thirty six km. drive from Kathgodam, the traveller approaches the road's dead end, where he confronts below his feet the lake of Naina Devi, the local goddess whose temple stands at the water's edge.

The lake of Nainital with its shining waters of lovely turquoise hue, glance up from the depths of their glen. The lake was first sounded in 1871 by Dr. Ansbury. He fixed the length from east to west as 702 feet, the width at Smugglers rock 792 feet and at the broadest point as 1518 feet, the circumference as 11,880 feet and the depth between 20 and 97 feet.

Nainital is surrounded with a cluster of lakes, out of which Bhimtal is most famous where a beautiful sheet of water surrounded by high wooded hills, and just over a 800 metre in length and 300 metres in breadth. Its water is of a bluish green and very clear. Fish is available in plenty and can be observed leaping up

in the air. The lake has a island which adds to the beauty of the lake. At the end of the lake is an old temple which has a wooden *Chhatri* or canopy built by a Kumaon Raja Baj, Bahadur Chand.

There are other lakes in the neighbourhood off the main roads but known to enthusiastic anglers, such as Sat-Tal, Malwa Tal and Naukuthiya Tal. Naukuthiya Tal is most famous because of its nine corners and the legend attached to it. Birds from Salim Ali's book can be seen here. Another famous lake is Malwa-ka-tal which lies about twelve kilometres to the east of Bhimtal and is about 1460 metres by 210 meters.

But the gem amongst pearls of lakes remains Nainital. The emerald coloured lake is encircled by graceful willows. During the day, the city with brightly coloured tiny villas and bunglows and ponies, rikshaws and sail boats beckon the visitors to discover the town in its own special way. And as the sun sinks behind the mountains, the hill station turns into an enchanting, alluring fairy land, reflections of the row of lights dancing in the water to weave mysterious fantasies.

### Rain-drenched town

Nainital remains bathed for weeks at a time, soaking in mist and rain, the average annual rainfall being nearly ninety inches. Nainital gets maximum rain because it stands on the outer range of hills, considerably higher than the lower hills adjoining it, and catches the rain clouds which are thus to a large extent exhausted before reaching Ranikhet what to say of Almora.

Heavy rain played havoc in Nainital on 18th September 1880 when the entire hillside of China Peak collapsed and made a clean sweep of Victoria Hotel premises. The entire tragedy has been thus described by Atkinson, "In a moment the whole precipitous cliff overhanging the spot fell with a tremendous roar, burying at once the hotel, the soldiers, the assembly rooms below, the library, orderly room, road and garden. Almost every person in the buildings and grounds was entombed, the place shook as with an earthquake, and the water of the lake was driven to the south part of it in an immense wave, while vast clouds of dust rose from the falling masses like volumes of smoke after a terri-

ble explosion."<sup>1</sup> The total number of dead and missing was 43 Europeans and 108 Indians.

A hundred years have gone by since the 18 September 1880 catastrophe. People have now forgotten the lesson taught by one of the most tragic calamities of Kumaon hills. Unfettered cutting of trees and hillside continues and the drains dug earlier now remain choked. It must be kept in mind that lakes are made in the hills due to landslides and they disappear like that only as has been the case with the famed Gohna lake.

### **Nainital grows as a tourist spot**

Nainital was first brought into limelight in 1841 through the columns of 'Agra Akhbar' and soon it attracted the attention of Bishop Daniel Wilson of Calcutta, whose journey into this area has been thus described, "The Bishop passed through Nainital on his way to Almora in February and again on his return in March 1844. The station had just been selected, no houses were built. The weather was inclement during the Bishop's sojourn at the place his Lordship suffered in his health and having to reside in a dark mud hut, which admitted light only by the door. The whole scene appeared to him more of a wilderness than a paradise. This, no doubt suggested to his mind the name which he proposed for the church and by which the building since created has been designed. Nainital is situated in a valley running from West to East and bounded on the north by the peak of China (2,590 metres) continued by Alma (2394 metres) and Sker-ka-Danda (2360 metres) to the eastern extremity where the ridge descends to the level of the lake 1805 metres above sea level. On the west the rugged hill of Deopate (2,397 metres) and on the south Ayarpata attains an elevation of 2,238 metres diminishing gradually towards the east. The eastern boundary is a pass through which the surplus waters of the lake find an exit forming the principal source of the Baliya river which in turn is the principal feeder of Gaula river. Oak, cypress and other beautiful trees continue from the margin of the lake upwards the ridges for 2 kms. upto the peaks which stands at the extremes of this vast amphitheatre. There are two sulphur springs—

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1. E.T. Atkinson, *The Himalayan Gazetteer*.

one near the Rawksdale and the other just outside the southern end of the lake."

The first building to be constructed in Nainital was of the "St. John in Wilderness." Few buildings were constructed later, amongst which Victoria Hotel was prominent but unfortunately it was washed away in the cloud burst of 1880. Amongst the early settlers of Nainital were the Shah's of Almora who caused to be constructed most of the existing bungalows at Nainital. The selection of Nainital as the summer seat of the government in 1856 was instrumental for large scale construction after which extensive construction activity started on all sides.

Nainital, like other towns of India, is getting over-crowded due to extensive and unplanned constructions. Today, Nainital is not all that beautiful as it used to be with its spacious bazars and bylanes.

### **View from China Peak**

Nainital is surrounded from all sides with a chain of mountain peaks which provide excellent scenic views of the down town and the Himalayas which lie across the mountain ranges, one piled after another, but the best view of Nainital is from the China Peak about which what Sir John Stratchey wrote there in 'Calcutta Review' holds good even today. "Let us suppose that we have ascended the first range of hills that rises above the plains, in Kumaon, to the lofty peak of Cheena, which overhangs the lake and station of Nainital. From this point, the elevation of which is about 8700 feet, an observer can obtain an admirable idea of the structure of this part of the Himalaya. Over horizontal distance from the foot of hills is only about five miles. We look down over the beautiful wooded mountains of Gagar range, covered thickly with oak and pine, mingled with the gorgeous rhododendron, to the Bhabar forest, which lies almost at our feet, 700 feet below, and beyond to the Terai and the great plain. Turning to the North, we have before us a scene which the painter and poet can alone describe, but which can never pass from the mind of one who has once behold it. A chaotic mass of mountains lies before us, wooded hills, and deep ravines, and dark blue ranges rising one above another, and behind all, piled up into the sky, the snowy peaks of the great Himalaya. He

who has seen this view, or the still finer ones that are to be obtained from other parts of Central Kumaon, may feel quite satisfied that he has seen the most sublime and astonishing of all earthly spectacles.<sup>“1</sup>

A gem in perfect setting, this charming lake resort was discovered by an English traveller. Graceful willows encircle the emerald mountain lake. During the day, the city with brightly coloured tiny villas and bungalows and ponies, rikshaws and sail boats beckons the visitors to discover the town in its own special way. And as the sun sinks behind the mountains, the hill station turns into an enchanting, alluring fairyland. The lake reflecting the row of lights dancing in the water wears a mysterious fantasy. That is, how it is Nainital—the lake town.

## THE HOME TOWN—ALMORA

Almora is my home town, hence the thought about it as *janani janmabhumi sch swargayapi gariyasi*—the motherland is not only like heaven but even better than what a heaven can be—so is Almora for me. I am reminded of my childhood days in Almora with nostalgia.

### **Historic town**

Nestling amongst the lower spurs of the great Himalayas and surrounded by range upon range of higher mountains, fading into blue distance, is the town of Almora which has been described in Skandpurana as *kaushiki salmal maddhey punnayak kashagah parwateh*.

Almora was founded in 1560 by one of the Chand Rajas of Kumaon, named Kalyan Singh (Chand). The Raja was hunting in the forest and while chasing a hare he saw that in the midst of forest it turned into a tiger. It was considered a good omen. The advisers of Raja advised that this place should be turned into a capital. Consequently, a crowbar was driven in the earth which went deep and when withdrawn it came out blood stained.

The name of Almora is said to be a variant or corruption of Kilmora, the native word for the red sorrel, which grows abund-

antly in the hills.

### **The landscape**

Nothing among the lower spurs of the great Himalayas, and surrounded by the magnificent range of Nanda Devi (25,626 ft.) highest mountain within Indian Republic, Trisul 6,307 mts. (23,460 ft.) the trident of Mahadeo, Pancha Chuli, the five fire stalls of the Mahadeo, on the western extremity, the square mass of Holy Badrinath group of peaks which consists of Hathi Parvat—22,330 ft. (6827 mtrs.), Gauri Parvat—22,023 ft. (6712 mtrs.), Kamet 25,417 ft. (7944 mtrs.), Nailkantha—21,650 ft. (6597 mtrs.) and the massive square of Chaukhamba 23,420 ft. (7237 mtrs.), besides numerous other known and unknown peaks. These are snowy summits, the sacred guardians of the Indian Peninsula and the home of greater gods which are visible from Almora.

From Almora the sharp peak of Nanda Devi may be seen at times what looks like a wreath of smoke, which devout Hindu sentiment has supposed to be the sacrificial fire of Shiva which burns perpetually.

Almora is at its best during rainy season and in autumn when the valleys and hill sides in and around Almora assume the most verdure, covering every foot of ground, so that the eye is delighted with delicate and endlessly diversified greenery, which appears to outlive in clearest colour every fold and dimple of the hills. The rains in Almora are more endurable than in most other hill stations, owing to the scarcity of the rainfall.

### **The town with its stone floored Bazar**

The town lies on the ridge of a hill, a little over 5,000 feet above sea level, and surrounded on three sides by deep valleys through few small rivers, the Sual and the Kosi, they ultimately join the Ganges. On the north-east, the ridge runs to meet the higher hills. There are forests on the upper part of the most of the surrounded ranges, but for a few miles around Almora there is a general absence of trees, said to be due to the practice of the Gurkhas, who were never prepared to accept any forest near fortresses occupied by them because it would provide natural cover to the advancing enemies. They denuded Almora hills of its rich forest

wealth for this awful defensive strategy. Most of the present forest was planted by the Britishers.

Almora Bazar is perhaps unique in the sense that it has stone flooring over solid rock, although its length with a row of exquisitely carved out houses and right in the centre of the Bazar over the Almora hill top is located the ancient fort, the last defenders of which were Gurkhas in 1815, when the place was captured by the Britishers. Today, this fort houses the District Magistrate's office and the civil courts.

Almora Bazar is unique and picturesque in many ways, particularly because of the excellently carved wooden fronts of the houses, the lower storey of which forms a shop or an open verandah supported on small pillars. The oldest houses of Bazar are located in Khajanchi Mohalla which was built by Narayan Sah, the businessman, steward and treasurer of the Chands who are known today as Thulgaria Shah's.

### **The Ramsay College**

Further down the Bazar, we come to an assemblage of public buildings, including the tehsil, hospital and Ramsay College. The Ramsay College building is of historical importance because it was built as far back as 1871. It has played pivotal role in the upliftment of Kumaon. I had my early education in this school.

Almora has played vital role as seat of learning for entire Uttarakhand.

### **The temples of Almora**

Almora abounds with temples. In the true tradition of ancient capitals, it has Navdurga (nine goddesses) and Ashtabhairauv (eight Bhairav) temples, located at strategic point, the most famous being the temple of Nanda Devi which was built by Raja Baj Bahadur Chand, Tularameshwar by late Tularam Shah Thulgharia and Murli Manohar temple. There are temples of many other Gods and Goddesses out of which the Golla Devta temple (Bhairav) at Chitai and Kasar Devi at Kashaya Parvat are most famous. The temple of Chitai is most acknowledged as the dispenser of justice.

### **The seat of culture**

The people of Almora leaving out the Khasiyas and Doms who form primarily the basic agricultural bulk of the population live in the rural area of Almora and are in fact the original inhabitants of Kumaon. The other castes are Brahmins and Baniyas or small traders, Moussalmans and Christians, most of whom migrated from different parts of India. The people of Almora are fond of education and culture.

The chief occupation of the people of Almora is government service, ordinary trade and barter. In fact there is a strong desire of education in the people of Almora and this factor alone has made it possible that you can find a man from Almora not only in every nook and corner of India but almost all over the world. Almora has produced reknowned scholars who have done extremely well in different fields of occupation.

Almora, being the seat of the kings, has unique distinction of being the centre of many cultural activities.

It was here that Udai Shanker and Anna Pavalova chose to enact many of the dramas out of the pages of our scriptures.

### **Almora as a hill station**

Almora is surrounded with a chain of scenic beauty spots which can easily be approached from Almora. Out of these, such places are most famed like Binsar, Kausani, Jogeshwar, Mrigtola and Simtola. Mr. E.S. Oakly has rightly paid this tribute to Almora—

*Sweetest breezes blow athwart thee  
O Almora !  
Roses bloom high all the year  
In thy golden atmosphere,  
And all flowers are dear,  
O Almora.*

## TREK TO PINDARI GLACIER

It is understood that some Lt. Governor of the United Provinces, having a surplus at the end of his financial year, resolved that it might be profitably spent on making accessible some of the glorious scenery of the Kumaon Himalayas. He accordingly planted staging bungalows at convenient distances, right from Bagesewar to the glacier from which the Pindar river flows, a total distance of eighty miles from Almora and thus all lovers of nature in her grandest manifestations are lasting debtors to his generous thoughtfulness.

From the Pindari glacier one can move up the moraine and reach Traill's pass, named after G. W. Traill, the first commissioner of Kumaon who was desirous of finding a direct route to Johar so as to give a boost to the trade. Since then it is called Traill's Pass or Maluk Singh Buda Pass who was the first to cross the Pass and enter into Johar valley.

### Pindari

Pindari glacier is one of the most beautiful and well known glaciers in the Central Himalayas. It originates from Nandakhat 21,690 ft. (6611 metre) high peak which lies within the Nanda Devi sanctuary.

General Stratchey was the first person to record the movement of the snout. He observed in 1848 that the mean daily movement in the uppermost part was 5.3 inches, in the lowermost part 4.8 inches and in the middle portion 10 inches for the upper half and 9.4 inches for the lower half. In case we take the average of all these, the mean movement of Pindari would come about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches per day. Taking the movement as a measure the snow falling at the source of the glacier would take about 44 years to reach the snout. Thus in 1984, the snow reaching the shout would be that which fell in the year 1940.

### **The route to Pindari**

Pindari is approachable by rail upto Kathgodam from where direct bus services are available upto Bageshwar passing through such picturesque places as Ranikhet and Kausani. The closeness of this glacier to the railhead and its exquisite beauty has drawn the attention of trekkers and adventurers alike. The traffic to Pindari has been continuous as is evinced from the glaring entries made in the log books of Dak Bungalow.

After a day's rest and sight seeing spree at Bageshwar, the trekker can leave for Kapkot again by bus. It involves a journey of 24 km.

From Kapkot foot trek starts which passes through Loharkhet. Enroute to Pindari, we travel for several miles upto the right bank of the Suryu at first along a road shaded by bamboos and other sub-tropical vegetations, for the valley is low and hot, but afterwards usual pine, haze and maple trees are found. Oh ! what a charm of walking over forest paths. The sunlight falls tempered by lofty foliage, between the tall straight stems of the pines on the hillside, slopes or at higher elevation. One climbs or descends among guarded leafy oak and rhodendron the earth everywhere clothed with fern and moses and creeper, moist, cool grass and emerald green river bank on every side tempting the eye to linger on their beauty. The scent of sweet wild flowers mingles with the rosin flavoured odour of the pines, and bright blue sky and glorious sunshine, over reach all the fair scene, near and far. It is indeed an earthly paradise.

A village here and there is passed, near some clearing in the forest, where the peaceful Kumaoni pursues his trade from gene-

ration to generation and the noises of children are heard in the depths of the woods, as they drive the goats and cows along the forest roads. One can quite frequently hear at height the shrill cries of the jackals. Now and then a drove of monkeys breaks away over the tree tops, startled by the travellers' approach, or a partridge rises noisily breaking the calm of the forest.

When with some toil, we reach the summit of a lofty range wonderous scene expands on every side. How pleasant to sit down on some fallen trunk under cool shade, and drink in the freshening breeze, while the eyes stray from vale to vale and range to range of snow capped peak.

The river is an interesting and fair companion on our upward way, flowing sometime in broad shallow rapids, bright and sparkling at the other time gathering its waters in dark deep pools under lofty overhanging rocks, which the path skirts or climbs as best as it may. The river is flanked on both sides by steep heights, which at times retire leaving fairly but level spaces where some little cultivation is done.

The lofty hill side of Dhakuri is covered with forests of oak, cypress and rhodendron, and carpeted with every variety of flowers, ferns, mosses and abounding with wild strawberries. The view from the top of the range is as a rule visible only in the early morning, as during the day clouds invariably collect and conceal the higher summits.

You cross Khati and then Dwali, which is situated at the juncure of the Kaphni with the Pindar. A continued roar and blasts of water keep us awake. Here the mountains are clothed with dense forest. Words cannot describe the grandeur of these towering fortresses of rock, clothed as verdure and adorned with foaming cascades and lightly spraying water falls which reflect beautiful rainbow when sun's rays fall on these.

### **The first impression of the glacier**

Phurkia, the last stage, is about four miles from the glacier. It has a small rest house. The elevation is 9,900 ft. From here the glacier is not very far. The first sight of the glacier is little disappointing. It appears to be a great slope of dirty snow coming down between two huge mountains, and between high banks of moraine rubbish, and ending of suddenly in the valley. All

around are the great snow peaks, over 20,000 ft. high. In the right rises the sharp cone of Nanda Kot. The river rushes out of a kind of cave or mouth below the glacier, of considerable size at its very base.

After crossing the first portion of the glacier, we come to the formidable part where the ice begins to rise in great humps or hummocks, with crevasses underneath which water flows. The ice caves and pits with their depths of clear blue ice look very beautiful.

### **Stunning views**

At the foot of the Pindari glacier in Kumaon, the river Pindar issues from an icy-cavern, and is poetically said to flow from the locks of Shiva. The Pindar is a glorious river, filling the whole gorge with its rear. There are water falls over the cliffs above the river, some of which are over 400 ft. in height, and can be seen for aloft falling over still higher precipices in some cases the whole cascade with its various leaps being not less than 1200 feet in perpendicular descent. The mountain scenery is simply stupendous. As we look up to mountain, rising sheer from the river bank to a height of 8,000 ft. above the river and 16,000 ft. above sea level, clothed with forest about half way and ending at the top of terrific battlements and walls of bare rock. Then above all this, glimpses of the snowy peaks rearing into the very zenith as it seemed, at a height of 25,000 ft. But words and figures can give no idea of the glories of such a scene. They are truly "the wonderful works of Gods" and among the grandest sights on the earth.

## THE LURE OF THE VALLEY

The Himalayas invite the attention not only for their grandeur and sublimity but in the words of Holdsworth "All of a sudden, I realised that I was simply surrounded by primulas. At once, the day seemed to brighten perceptibility. Forgotten were all pain and cold and lost prters and what a primulas it was ?" There is something in the valley of flowers which holds the fascination, arrests the attention, and contains constant charm to come and enjoy the untrampled flowers as they grow in the nature's garden—Nandan Kanan.

The first Europeen trekker who struck upon the valley was Col. Edmund Smythe who during the course of his extensive explorations in the Uttarakhand crossed Lakshaman pass over Bhyundhar ridge in 1862 and descended down only to find a paradise of infinite beauty which was later further investigated by Dr. T.G. Longstaff who points out in his famed book *This My Voyage* that "Beyond these glaciers we looked down into a valley of the richest green balm to the eyes after the stormy desolation we had left behind we reached it on July 13th to find the most luxuriant meadows we had met with in this part of the Himalaya. We waded through flowers upto our waists fern, yellow lilies and anemoneas, green fritillaries, purple monks-hood, blue dwarf-

iris, masses of forget-me-nots with yellow king cups by the streams. Innumerable butterflies of alpine forms including at least two species of large swallow-tails, with many singing birds were about us on all sides we spent a whole day there." But unfortunately after these early wanderings, the valley fell into oblivion. It goes to the credit of Frank S. Smythe that he broke the spell by breaking the news that there was a place called valley of flowers which could be bargained for "let civilisation have its noise and me my quietitude."

Frank S. Smythe was so much fascinated and charmed by the attractions of the valley that he again visited it in the year 1936 after having visited it in 1931 while returning from Kamet and recorded his experiences, "wading knee deep through the ocean of flowers, ranging in colour from the sky blue of the poppies to the deep wine-red of potentillas. To us the Bhyundar Valley will always remain the valley of flowers. It is a place to escape for those wearied of modern civilisation."<sup>1</sup> He submitted samples of seeds and pods to the Royal Botanical Garden, Edinburg. The escape from the modern civilisation has become more urgent in view of the crowded and chaotic confusion of contemporary civilisation and corrupting influence of the mod culture.

Frank Smythe reduced his experiences about the valley in a book entitled *Valley of Flowers* which attracted wide acclaim and made the valley a much sought after paradise. Amongst such early enthusiasts was Miss. Joan Margaret Legge who was commissioned by the Royal Botanical Garden of England for investigating the valley and collecting the bulbs and seeds of rare species of Himalayan flora. She was so fascinated by the divine surroundings that she is reported to have remarked "I will lift mine eyes up to the hills whence cometh my help." This remark bears testimony to her undying faith and unstinted dedication to her pursuit to which the tombstone installed at the place where she died after a fall over the rock precipices bears testimony. The inscription on the tombstone reads—

<sup>1</sup>.. F. S. Smythe, *The Valley of Flowers*.

*In Living Memory  
of  
Joan Margaret Legge  
Feb. 21st 1885  
July 4th 1939.*

"I will lift up mine eyes upto the hills from whence cometh my help."

### **The legend**

The Himalayas are known as the abode of Gods and Goddesses, mention about which quite frequently occurs in the Vedas, epics, ancient scriptures, and other Sanskrit literature. The Pandavas, particularly the Garhwal Himalayas which were then known as Kedarkhand. In the annals of ancient classic Sanskrit literature, Himalayas find most celebrated place, particularly in the writings of Kalidasa who has vividly portrayed the beauties of nature in most exquisitely ornamented terms —

*In the north lieth  
the king of mountains  
Himalaya by name, the abode of  
perpetual snows, and home of Gods and  
Goddesses.*

In the classical literature, Himalayas have been described as the storehouse of life saving medicinal plants including sanjeevanbuti which grows in these parts, particularly over the Dronagiri hills. When Lakshaman was lying unconscious at the battlefield of Lanka, Hanuman took a whole chunk of Dronagiri hill when he was unable to locate sunjeevanbuti. While Hanuman was flying over Hemkund Lokpal, a few pieces of the *buti* fell over the glacial lake where in memory of the incident a Lakshaman temple exists which is frequented by the locals from the neighbouring valleys at the time of Janmashtami.

An interesting story is related in Mahabharata about the discovery of the valley. It so happened that when once Draupadi was taking bath at the confluence of Lakshamanganga and Alapnanda, near Pandukeshwar, she saw a beautiful flower descending down the stream. Draupadi picked it up and found that it had exotic colours and exciting fragrance. Draupadi asked

Bhima to get some more flowers for her. Bhima left for the Bhyundar valley in search of the flowers and after climbing considerable height reached at a place called Nandan Kanan which lay on the banks of river Pushpaganga (river of flowers). He witnessed a colourful panorama of various shades of flowers including the Draupadi's much loved flower. Bhima picked up a handful of flowers and while happily returning home he was apprehended by the guards of the heavenly garden (Nandan-Kanan) who took him before the Gandharva king Chitraratha. The king was furious with rage but when he came to know that Bhima was brother of Arjuna he let him off with many more presents and banquets of choicest flowers. Arjuna had once saved Chitraratha from his enemies.

### Hemkund-Lokpal—the Sikh shrine

Just above Ghagaria lies Hemkund, meaning 'lake of ice' which is surrounded on all sides by seven peaks, a mention about which has been found in the Vichitra Nataka composed by Guru Govind Singh.

*Ab main apni katha bakhanoni  
 Tap Sadat jih bidhi mohi aanone  
 Hemkund parvat hai jahan  
 Sept Shringa sohat hai taban  
 Sept Shringa teh nam kahawa  
 Pandu raj jih jog kamava  
 Teh hum adhik tapashya sadhi  
 Mahakal Kalika aradhi.*

Guru Govind Singh has spoken about his previous births when he performed penance at a place surrounded by seven hills, where once Panduraja had also meditated. Here Guru Govind Singh propitiated Mahakali and secured her blessings. This unique place where wisdom broke upon him was unknown to the Sikhs till Havaladar Sohan Singh who was serving as a Gyani at the golden temple. Amritsar, set out on a perilous journey for unknown heights to locate and discover the lake which lay hidden behind the seven hills. During his wanderings in the Garhwal Himalayas he struck upon a lake which was locally known as Lokpal. Fired with an earnest desire to discover the lake which lay surrounded by seven hills, he set himself on the eventful jour-

ney, upstream Lakshamanganga. From Ghagharia, as if by intuition he climbed the treacherous rocks and at the end of journey he climbed the succession of stairs which ultimately led him to the celestial lake which lay spread over a vast area in lap of seven towering peaks—Saptsringa. Here he had a divine vision which revealed reality and truth to him. He stayed for some time and then left for Amritsar in order to break the happy news. He was given a rousing reception and wide acclaim. Encouraged by the effect created by his find, he again set out for another journey alongwith Bhai Vir Singh Ji, the famed Gurumukhi poet. They established a Gurudwara, at a height of 3,400 m. Probably it is the highest shrine. Havalidar Sohan Singh now became Gyani Sohan Singh by constant striving and endless pursuit. He stayed on there for the remaining part of his life and ultimately death eclipsed his glorious pursuit leaving behind trail of his endeavour and earnestness.

The route upto Hemkund is same as for the valley of flowers from Govindghat. At Govindghat, the pilgrim is welcomed and feasted by the Granthi of the Gurudwara. And after a brief halt, the pilgrim sets out for the onward journey. At Ghagaria he is again welcomed by the caretaker of the Gurudwara who not only offers a hot cup of tea but makes arrangement for the night's rest. Next day the pilgrims set off for the valley of flowers or the Hemkund-Lokpal or both. The trek to Hemkund is a steep climb and at the end of journey there are some 1100 stairs. From the hill top, the fluttering flag of the Nishan Saheb beckons you to come up and leave behind the miseries of the world. Lo ! at long last after day-long tiring journey, the beautiful lake lies there reflecting the seven snowclad peaks with their flowing glaciers. Most of the dedicated devotees take a dip in the icy cold water of the lake which is always followed with a darshan of the Lakshman temple and the Gurudwara which has been built where Guru Govind Singh once meditated. Today, a magnificent Gurudwara has come up in place of the old.

### Trek to the valley

Bhyundar Valley is sandwiched between Niti and Mana. The approach to this valley lies from Govindghat which is only 11 km. from Joshimath or Rishikesh-Badrinath route at a distance

of 265 km. from Rishikesh. Sikhs have set up a Gurudwara at Govindghat which offers tea and food to the pilgrims and tourists, irrespective of their caste, creed and nationality, who are on their way to the valley of flowers or the Hemkund-Lokpal or both. From there, the foot journey starts and at the very outset the hanging bridge over Alaknanda has to be crossed and soon after the trek ascends all along the Lakshamanganga current. The winding path leads to the hamlet of Punn, at the approach of which the tired trekker is welcomed by a smiling tea stall-keeper. Almost all the *yatraris* sit round the wooden bench waiting for their turn to drink the hot cup of tea. The inhabitants of this village move in the upper ridges where pasture lands are available but during winter they come down to their villages where they mostly rear sheeps or grow potatoes and beans in abundance. From Punn, the trek enters a dense forest of oaks, chestnuts, willows and rhododendron. Across the river, far in the horizon, one can see the roaring water fall descending down the hill slope like a necklace of pearls. As the climber goes up and up, bend after bend, he is greeted by the smiling children or woman-folk from the neighbouring villages who always carry heavy loads over their backs. A little before the camping site of Ghagaria, the tourist witnesses the marvellous view of Hathi Parvat (22,070 ft.). Ghagaria is preceded with beautiful pasture lands which are frequently dotted with deodar trees. And then, at the end of evening's journey comes the hamlet Ghagaria which lies amidst thick deodar forest with its tourist bungalow and a forest rest house. Few hutments lie scattered here and there selling tea and wares of local necessity. They also provide food but it is always Gurudwara which comes to the rescue of the pilgrims and other camp attendants.

The night's rest at Ghagaria is memorable because of the camp-fire lit night. Next morning, most of the trekkers leave for the valley of flowers and the pilgrims always first make for the Hemkund. The trek for both the places is quite common for some distance and then the trek for the valley of flowers proceeds all along the Pushpaganga, while for the Lokpal Hemkund it climbs up steeply.

Ordinarily, the tourists trek up to the Ghagaria from Govindghat on the first day either on foot or on ponies and make night

halt at Ghagaria. On the second day, they journey up to the valley and on return climb upto Hemkund-Lokpal and again make a night's halt at the Ghagaria camp. On the third day, they descend down the valley and board their vehicles at Govindghat for their destination carrying home sweet memories of the valley, and the celestial lake shrine—Hemkund-Lokpal.



## JAUNSAR BABAR AND ITS DREAMY INHABITANTS

About sixtyfive thousand feudal and happy go lucky people of Jaunsar Babar inhabit 446 square miles of hill locked region of Chakrata and Purola tahsil, which forms the northern half of the Dehradun district; its southern side is adjacent to the western Dun Pargana of the same district. The western and north-western boundaries are contiguous with Sirmur, Jubbal and Taroch, all of which were princely states. It blends legacy of the fast vanishing past which was sill recently untouched by the rise and fall of the glittering empires down below in the plains. In fact they could hardly aspire to play lofty roles in the history of the sub-continent, however, from the pages of the ancient history, we have sufficient evidence to prove that this area had certainly some link with the northern part of the country, particularly during Vedic, Mauryan, Kushan and Gupta period. The Ashoka pillar at Kalsi bears testimony to the fact. At Jagatram, near Kalsi, on the left bank of Yamuna, archaeological finds of an Aswamedh Yajna were unearthed. The excavation at this site led to the discovery of the two out of four sacrificial altars of king Shahasranama. The bricks unearthed describe him as 'Yug Shilageti' and 'Yogeshwara' or lord of age. These altars are in the shape of a hawk which seems as if ready to take a flight. This

and other evidence goes to justify that Kalsi was once centre and seat of an important ancient empire which initiated an entirely new cultural pattern within Jaunsar-Babar-Mahasu and Rawain area. The inhabitants of these places look alike and follow identical customs even today distinctly different than those pursued by their counterparts in Garhwal-Kumaon hills and Himachal Pradesh. They are definitely of different stock which is further proved by the fact that their physical features, customs and jewellery is distinctly different. To strengthen this theory, the art and architecture of the area can also be taken into account. The temples are of distinctly local design with a wooden frame outside them. A close investigation of Lakhmandal (Dehradun distt.) reveals that the stone used for the construction of the temples speak of highly skilled execution, bearing explicit imprint of Greco-Roman impact, like of which is found in Mathura. The Yaksha and Yakshani sculptures alongwith Shiv-Parvati figures as found in Lakhmandal and parts of Ravain and parts of Fateh Parvat Bangan go to show that Jaunsar is nothing but distorted version of Yavansar, thereby meaning that the existing inhabitants are most probably descendants of Kushans and Huns who settled in these parts or were left behind when wave after wave of them swept past these places.

### **Traces of ancient social order**

As a result of above socio-political background there seems ample justification for the locals' claim of descent from Pandavas and Kaurvas. A look inside the descriptive roles of Mahabharata reveals that when Kauravas were engaged in a life and death struggle against the Pandavas in the battlefield of Kurukshetra, king Bhogdutta of this part arrayed himself on the side of the Kauravas. This historical background is evident even today in the adjoining patti of Fatehparvat-Panchgain where Rajputs and Brahmins intermarry and wives are priced which makes them open for free and frequent sale. In fact, birth of a child shoots up her price and more the number of houses she has seen more valued she becomes and with the past experience of sexual liberty which she enjoys at her paternal place, particularly during festivals compels her to yonder for fresh experiences. However, leaving aside these aspects of life she is the backbone of family economy because she

is the collector of wood, fetcher of water and has to bear the brunt of attending the daily cores of life while menfol normally sit and drink. An interesting aspect of Jaunsari weddings is that the bride goes to the bridegroom's house where the marriage ceremony is performed. The bride's party is entertained by the groom's father.

Queerly enough, they still follow the example of their ancestors and adhere to a polyandrous society where wives are priced and exchanged freely. But in spite of the sexual liberty which a woman enjoys, particularly at her parents' house, she is no more than a serf who serves the pay master. Polyandry has bounded and glued the families together and has helped in keeping the population down. Thus these people are still gripped by superstitions, orthodoxy, disease and sexual complications which has accounted for poor education and backwardness in them.

All efforts of reform have fallen on rocks. An interesting story is narrated about the wife of a Meerut Division commissioner. Fired by an ideal of social reformation, the enthusiastic lady visited interior parts of Jaunsar and collected local women round the village tree and told her listeners, through an interpreter, that polyandry was a thing of the past; she advised one lady should have one husband, gave her example that she was living with one man for the last thirty years and she has never seen anyone else. The attentive ladies threw penetrating glances at her and after quick whispering exchanges one of the older ladies got up and said that 'well ladies' what she was trying to say is that for the last thirty years she has been so unfortunate that she has not seen another man. What a pity ?' The embarrassing remark was never translated to the enthusiastic lady but she could see from the fixed faces that her appeal was lost.

### **Pastoral religion**

Mahashu is the presiding deity of Jaunsaris according to the District Gazetteer of Dehradun. The origin of the Mahashu as given by Hamilton and reproduced by Mr. Williams is rather different. Hamilton supposes him to be of scythian descent and related that according to Brahmanical traditions at a remote era of time ploughing in the Pargana of Bucan saw snakes which erecting itself before him said, 'I am sent by the divinity. Raise near the place an image to be worshipped and call it the Mahashu

Deota and it will reveal to you laws that are to be obeyed. 'According to another local legend it is believed that one Uma Bhatt lived in the village of Maindrath and had a large family of relatives and dependents. At this time, a demon named Kirber Danav made its appearance at the confluence of the Tons and Yamuna near Kalsi and day by day ate Uma's family members until only Uma and three sons and one daughter remained. Uma fled to the forests of Yamuna and wandered about from place to place seeking means to destroy the demons and avenge the death of relatives. One night, the Mahashu Deota appeared before him in a dream and said 'be of Good Cheer, O Uma, proceed to Kashmir where the four Mahashus dwell and invoke their aid, they will destroy the demon for no one else can.' Uma followed this advice and succeeded in killing the demon.

The Chalta Mahashu frequently tours the Jaunsar Babar areas on the invitation of Khat (a group of villages). In the good old days a large party accompanied the Chalta Mahashu with great pomp and show and at the end of the journey great deal of dancing and feasting was arranged. Besides Mahashu, another God to be worshipped is Narshingh Deota. The simpleton fearful villagers hold Baki (witch doctor) and Dag (witch) with awe and reverence.

The temple of Halid is the most reckoned and popular temple of Jaunsar Babar. Visits to this temple are frequently made by the Jaunsaris and people from Himachal Pradesh also visit this place and worship Baitha Deota here.

### **Fond of fairs and festivals**

Full of the joy of life, steeped in tradition and living amidst beauties of nature these good looking people always lead a busy life, carrying cyclindrical baskets to hold the wooden revolving spindle (*takli*) and wool for spinning. Men and women often dance together in a big colourful circle in measured rhythmic stepping. Festivals present most colourful sights when women can be seen in their best of attire all giggling and dancing with gay abandon and pleasure. Their menfolk carry gods on resplendent crimson palanquins which are preceded by the drummers and trumpeteers who tug flowers over their headgear.

The most important festival of Jaunsar is the Magh which is

followed by Besoo fair which normally falls in the month of April. The Jagra festival is an entirely religious affair connected with Mahashu when he is taken out for a bath in the river bed. Another interesting fair is the Man fair which is solely connected with the catching of the fish. A bark of tree, known as Tejbal is collected and after crushing it is thrown in the water. This powder has stunning effect over the fishes.

### **Peace loving people**

During the British rule, the administrative pattern of Jaunsar Babar was entirely different from what it is now. The locals were left to their fate under the care of a Sayana who was appointed to carry out certain official functions which were supervised by the Sadar Sayana or Khat. Sayana has been explained in the Dastur-ul-Amal as the keeper of law and order. Another important institution was 'Khumri'. Like the Panchayats of rural areas in the plain, the Khumri met as an assembly of people. When Britishers took over this area, policing was left in the hands of revenue police which still continues except in parts of Chakrata Tahsil.

Now with the passage of time change is creeping in to which people have responded well.



## THE LAKE OF SKELETONS—RUPKUND

Mysterious human skeletons, still well preserved and most of them unmutilated lie scattered all around the oval shaped lake named Rupkund which lies at an altitude of 4780 mtrs., amidst high Himalayas of Uttarakhand. This place is marked as Tribhuj in the survey maps of the district Chamoli (Uttar Pradesh) and falls at a longitude E-79.44 and latitude N-30.16 at a distance of some 208 km. from Kulsari, a small village which is situated in between Gwaldam-Karanprayag road. The lake is located between two features called Jinnarangoli (16,300 ft.) and Chaniya Kot (16,556 ft.) which lie just below the magnificent Nandaghundi and Trisul group of peaks. The lake is approximately 500 square ft. Its circumference and its average depth is 8 ft. The lake remains enveloped under thick snow for most part of the year except for a brief opening during August & September when snow melts away. At this time of the year the trekker can see the reflection of towering Nandaghundi and other peaks on the placid waters of the lake. All around the lake remains of human skeletons still lie scattered.

For a hazarding, a sojourn into this mysterious land the inquisitive trekker has to reach first Kathgodam or Rishikesh from where direct bus service is available upto Gwaldam. Gwaldam

has an excellent forest and tourist rest house for which prior reservation can be made from Divisional Forest Officer, Badrinath, Gopeshwar, District Chamoli. Local guides and coolies are also available here who can take you to this mysterious lake which provides besides trekking scientific investigation and excellent opportunity of adventure which is full of scenic and scientific attractions.

The trek to Rupkund calls for unstinted courage and the capacity to snug in a bed roll and pass sleepless night under a bivauac braving the hazards of a biting wind, hail, storm and snow.

#### **For whom the beath dell tolls**

The lone forest ranger who frequented this area suddenly struck in the year 1944 on a heap of human skeletons which were spread all over the place. Frightened by the ghastly sight he fled and reported the matter to his higher ups who immediately concluded that the skeletons must be of those fugitives who had fled from the war front. But soon this choosy theory was rejected since locals were already in the know of these remains of the past and year after year they were frequenting the area during Nanda Jat. They had a different story to tell.

In the year 1957 Dr. D. C. Majumdar visited this area and made startling revelations about the human skeletons and presented before the world the theory that the dead bodies were either remains of some Buddhist mission or Mohammad Tughluq's army which went to invade China. Commenting on the futility of these conclusions, some historians did put forward the idea that the remains could be of Gen. Zorawar Singh's ill-fated army, which went on a campaign of Tibet and met the sad fate on its return journey. This theory stands rejected in view of the fact that the route for Tibet does not lie from here.

The prevailing confusion about the identification of these known skeletons drew the attention of Swami Pranawanand of Andhra, living in Himalayas who hazarded a journey to the area and came out with certain definite conclusions. He visited the area five times and thus each time laid bare new facts of hidden past each drawing its origin from the folklore, particularly that of Raja Jasdhawal of Kannauj who undertook fateful journey to

this area in and around 14th century. His theory has also been supported by the carbon test theory of bones which has placed these human skeletons as of some six hundred years antiquity.

### Fables of the folklore

The folklore of Nanda is sung by the old ladies and bardic poets of the area which was translated for me by Sri Debram Nautiyal—the Rajguru of the Nanda temple of Nauti. The ballad when translated from original Garhwali text can be thus expressed—

Once upon a time,  
 Lord Shiva married Parwati  
 And after day long celebrations  
 Happily returning home  
 The caravan stopped  
 At the behest of Parwati  
 She wanted to quench her thirst.

×                    ×                    ×

Oh what a place to drink water  
 All barren and desolate  
 Helter and skelter ran everyone  
 Nervous, not knowing what to do  
 Seeing the plight of his retinue  
 Shiva thurst his Trisul  
 Lo behold, a gush of water  
 Seen turned into a big pool—

×                    ×                    ×

Happily Parwati descended from the *palki* and slowly strode forward to quench her thurst—

Gracefully she walked  
 Bowed low to drink handful of water  
 Wonder struck she saw a beautiful sight  
 Umbelievable, yet it was there  
 Beauty lending charms to beauty  
 Fascinated by the charming site  
 She named the lake as Rupkund  
 The mirror of beauty  
 Thereafter,

It has come to be known as Rupkund  
A sacred place for holy wanderings.

That is, how it is—the Rupkund and the mystery behind it. The bard narrates further that there were twin daughters of Himalayas—the divine king of mountains who were known as Nanda and Sunanda; the later was affectionately named as Balpa also. While Nanda was married to Lord Shiva, Balpa was married to Raja Jasdhawal of Kannauj. Happily each lived with their husband till—

Once Nanda, while on a usual stroll  
Walked up a hill  
Talking about her childhood  
To her companions,  
Not knowing what lay ahead  
She climbed a nearby mountain  
From here she could see far and wide  
and, far in the horizon  
Lay the township with its golden pinnacled roofs  
Set in the background of high towers and ramparts.

X

X

X

As if by impulse  
Nanda decided to descend over this city  
And beckoned the Vimana  
And after bidding goodbye to her friends  
She flew over the silvery clouds  
And soon she was hovering over the city  
Nanda glanced down  
For the Vimana to descend  
Below the Vimana  
Lay Kannauj  
She signalled.

X

X

X

A Vimana with a beautiful lady  
Ran the word round and round  
Entire Kannauj was literally on housetops  
Balpa also mounted the top floor of her palace  
To see who was this Goddess  
Descending from heaven

Oh! it was no one else than her own sister  
 She embraced her and wept with joy  
 Both talked and talked, endlessly  
 The Goddess was there, her own sister  
 People rejoiced that queen had a sister  
 A sister in the Himalayas  
 Where Gods dwelled.

×                    ×                    ×

Nanda was feasted and fetted  
 And for days together the celebrations went on  
 As day of departure approached  
 Nanda expressed her desire to return, but before it  
 To have a share in the fortunes of Kannauj  
 This was too much, yet  
 Balpa kept cool and assured  
 To discuss the demand with the king  
 For Raja Jasdhawal it was unusual demand  
 Wishful thinking, he told Nanda and  
 Sought to be excused.

×                    ×                    ×

Nanda felt insulted and dishonoured  
 She could hardly believe  
 That fortune could not be shared  
 Infuriated and burnt up  
 She left Kannauj but cursed  
 Fire and famine  
 Disease and disorder  
 Boil, boil, boil  
 Entire kingdom burn and boil.

×                    ×                    ×

The old ladies who sing the folk song narrate the pathetic fate which befell on Kannauj. Complete confusion and disorder reigned supreme. Frightened by the intensity of misfortunes, the king called his counsellors and royal astrologers who advised him to worship and propitiate Nanda who dwelt in high Himalayas. Taking to his heart the advice of the courtiers he proceeded on his fateful journey along with his wife and a retinue of servants and court entertainers. Unfortunately, against all wise counsel and Jat tradition, the Raja took some dancing girls with him who

entertained the royal entourage all along the journey. This infuriated Nanda and in her anger she turned all dancers into stones at a place called 'Patar Nachonia' or the place of dancing girls. Unmindful of the impending doom the foolish king continued on his path and soon encountered the problem of labour pains of his pregnant wife. The king left his wife at Balpa-Syaldeh where she ultimately succumbed to the pains. Undeterred, the doomed king proceeded further, unmindful of the disaster which lay in store for him. Angered by the audacity of the king, Nanda struck the party with thunder and storms which brought a fierce avalanche which carried away the entire party and buried them under mud, silt and snow.

What was in store for the Raja  
 Everybody knew, except the doomed  
 Who unwary of the impending disaster  
 Continued to proceed  
 Unmindful of the evil signs and warning.

×                    ×                    ×

Hail, storm and avalanche struck  
 Just above the Jiurangali,  
 The party was attacked by  
 The nature's worst agents  
 Resulting in the death of entire party.

×                    ×                    ×

Drowned and buried  
 In the placid waters of the Rupkund  
 Lie the dead bodies of Raja Jasdhawal's party  
 Reminding every pilgrim, to  
 Bow low to Nanda in silence  
 That is, how it is the mystery of  
 The skeletons and the Yatra of Rupkund.

### **Nanda Devi Jat**

According to the Nautiyals of Nauti Village and Kunwars of Kansua, the Nanda Jat was started by Garhwal Kings to propitiate Nanda and pray for the peace of departed souls. This Yatra takes place every twelfth year. Before the onset of yatra a Chau-Singha (four-horned goat) had taken birth which is feasted and fetted to lead the caravan all through the following route—

<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>Distance</i>
Nauti	Banam	9 kms.
Banaik	Nauti	13 kms.
Nauti	Kansua	10 kms.
Kansere	Sem	10 kms.
Sem	Kedhi	8 kms.
Kodhi	Kulsari	18 kms.
Kulsari	Cheparshyam	10 kms.
Cheparshyam	Faldiya-gaon	16 kms.
Faldiya-gaon	Mundoli	10 kms.
Mundoli	Ban	16 kms.
Ban	Gararipatal	10 kms.
Gararipatal	Paternacheniyam	13 kms.
Paternacheniyam	Sheela Samudra	16 kms.
Chandanikot	Sutal	17 kms.
Ghat	Laugashu	30 kms.
Banani	Navli	10 kms.
		<hr/>
		257 kms.
		<hr/>

It is significant that all along the 257 kms. the Jat is led by the Chau-Singha and the devotees walk barefooted braving the hazards of *yatra*. The Jat is greeted at every village by large number of crowds who feed and feast the *yatra* party and see it off at the outskirts of the village.

A trek to Rupkund is a fair bargain particularly for those who intend to see the strange, hidden and baffling aspects of nature.



## THE GODS, GODDESSES, DEMONS AND DEVILS OF UTTARAKHAND

Besides the Holy dhams of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath, the Uttarakhand is credited with a number of other religious temples located at different places. "There are 250 Saiva temples in Kumaon and 350 in Garhwal, and 35 Vaishnava temples in Kumaon and 61 in Garhwal. To the latter class, however, may be added 65 temples in Nagraja, the Serpent king, in Garhwal, which are by common report affiliated to the Vaishnava sects, but in which Shiva also has a place, under the form of Bhairava of the Shiva temples, 130 in Garhwal and 64 in Kumaon are dedicated to the Sakti or female form alone, but of the Vaisnava temples in both districts only eight. The Sakti form of both Shiva and Vishnu, however, occurs also in the temples dedicated to Nagraja and Bhairava, or rather these deities and their Saktis are popularly held to be forms of Vishnu and Shiva and their Saktis. Of the Saiva Sakti temples, 42 in Garhwal and 18 in Kumaon are dedicated to Kali, whilst the Sakti forms of the Bhairava temples are also known as emanations of Kali. Nanda comes next in popularity, and then Chandiga and Durga (all are names of Siva's wife), the son Ganesh and the minor deities and deified mortals and the pre-Brahmanical village Gods. The outcome of this examination is, therefore, that Siva and Vishnu and

their female forms are the principal objects of worship, but with them, either as their emanations or as separate divine entities, the representations of the holy demonistic cults of the older tribes are objects of worship both in temples and in domestic ceremonies.”<sup>1</sup> The religion that prevails in Uttarakhand is one of the oldest forms of Hindu religion.

### **Gods, demons and devils**

The type of worship prevalent in Kumaon and Garhwal is more of the character of demonism than of animism. It is startling to find that the idea of possession seems to be its very life and soul. It is believed that there exists a multitude of gods or spirits, some of them being old kings or members of the royal families of Kumaon or Garhwal in former days; others, grotesque goblins, like those of our European fairy stories; others ghosts of deceased persons who have died a violent death, committed some great crime, or differed in same way from the ordinary run of people—ghosts of women who have died in child birth, of men whose funeral ceremonies have been neglected, and so on. These are nearly all malevolents by nature, and all calamities and diseases are attributed to one or other of them. When a man imagines he is under evil influence of some god or spirit, he goes to a professional wizard, named ‘gantua’ who professes to find out what demon is tormenting him. By appropriate means he brings himself into relation with the deity, becomes ‘possessed’ by him, and then as his mouthpiece, orders what offerings or penances are required by the god. There we have an ingenious system of priestcraft the possibilities of which it is easy to perceive. Sometimes, quite a number of people, by dancing for a long time on certain ceremonial occasions, succeed in hypnotising themselves, and believe themselves to be possessed by one or even several deities.

### **Gantua—the mediator**

In Garhwal or Kumaon when any person is suffering from any calamity he seeks out the deity or ghost to be propitiated, by going to a gantua. The relations of a man attacked by serious

1. Atkinson, *Himalayan Districts*.

desease, or who has been robbed of property, or whose cattle have been stolen or lost, or who are anxious about the safety of members of their family at a distance, and so on, go early, fasting, taking a handful of rice, with a piece of offering for the gantua (sorcerer), and present them to him. He keeps the piece as his fee, and taking the grains of rice in the palms of his hands, moves them up and down, uttering incantations and the names of the local gods and ghosts, professing to calculate by the movement of grains of rice, he then declares who is the cause of the trouble, and gives advice as to the worship of the deity whom he names, and to whom the disorder or misfortune is ascribed. When the name of the God under whose baleful influence the afflicted person has fallen has been thus ascertained, resort is next made to the "dungaria", a devotee or dancer of the particular "deity". The name is derived from "Dungari" which means a hilltop, as these rustic rites are often performed in such high places of the field or perhaps because the dungaria usually resides in such places.

In case of sicknesess or misfortunes, he is very frequently invited to the house, and on his coming and taking his seat there, incense is offered to him, and he is begged to make himself at home and overlook any faults inadvertently committed by the afflicted person or by any other member of the family. Then a little tobacco is given to him to smoke in a "katori" or earthen vessel used for the purpose. After smoking it the man appears to show signs of intoxication or narcotic influence, and then suddenly jumps up with a wild yell. This is supposed to be the moment when he is "possessed" by the deity. Incense is again offered to him as the incarnation of the god, and he is humbly entreated to cure the sick person. At this stage the man sometimes remains mute, and deaf to all entreaties. Again and again he is propitiated with clasped hands and prostrations. After a while the god begins to attend, and the inspired man utters some stammering and mystic words. Then he unfolds the cause of disease or calamity, and enjoins certain gifts, offerings, or services for the satisfaction of the offended deity.

It is remarkable that to an extent the idea of incarnation, or rather personation enters into the popular religion of the country. The spirit of a god or demon is supposed to enter the bodies of

favoured worshippers, who are akin to all intents and for all purposes incarnations of the deity, capable of uttering his mind and endowed with his supernatural knowledge. It is something more than inspirations. This phenomenon has always puzzled me.

### Dancing to ecstasy—Tagar

The royal gods or Katyur gods, so called from their descent from the old Katyuri royal family, are opposed to a more plebian party of spirits called by the name of Haru, and no associate with them, though in general the two main classes of deities, the royal and demonical, can be got to unite in the same dancing ceremony. The Haru sections of gods have a place near temples named *dhuni* or fireplace, where dancing is done. The Katyur or royal deities have a place called *Kholi* for the same purpose. The devotees of the Haru dance after applying to their ladies the ashes of the *dhumi* (altar fire). They dance with a bamboo in their hands. The Katyur gods are fastidious, and will not allow anyone to bring into their dancing rites prohibited articles. The buffaloes, pigs, cocks, the goats and coconuts are offered to them. The devotees who personate the god are called "deo" and are tinged with pithya (or red powder) as a mark of their participation in the festivities. The entire place is kept sacred.

### The divine temptresses

A peculiar class of deities are the fairies, known by the name of Anchori, Kechari, Pari or Chanchari. These are supposed to be young females, of great beauty and artistically clothed, belonging to the court of Indra, to which they are attached as dancing girls. Their habitat is the firmament and they are very fond of bathing and disporting themselves in water, and gathering flowers on the top of the lofty mountains or by the side of crystal springs and lakes in remote forests. They correspond to the Apsaras, or heavenly nymphs, of whom we read so often in classical Sanskrit stories, whose principal occupation seems to have been that of tempting ascetics to break their vows, lest they should rival the gods in merit and consequent power. Young men and women fall prey to their evil glances, and become ill and die,

unless their friends find out the cause of their sickness and worship the fairies, together with dancing at night. The fairies are not regarded as goddesses, but as spirits, troublesome and destructive to those who are possessed by them. The snow ranges are their popular haunts. Fanciful stories of their falling in love with the mortals are told.

### **The ghosts**

The earliest connected account of the province of Kumaon is found in Traill's settlement report, 1820. Traill found the population divided into two classes, human beings and ghosts : "The ghost tribe" he says "is divided into many varieties. The first and most formidable is the bhut or ghosts of persons, who have died of a violent death, by murder, drowning, or public execution, and to whose spirit due funeral honours have not been paid. These require to be appeased by sacrifices and offerings. Masan or Chanchri are the ghosts of young children, the ladies of whom who are not buried and not burnt, and who prowl about the villages in the shape of bears and other wild animals. Tola or will-o'-wisps are ghosts of bachelors, that is males who die at mature age unmarried, dwellers in solitary places and condemned by other ghosts. The Airi or ghosts of persons killed in hunting, wandered about the forests in which their death occurred, and might be heard from time to time hallooing to their spectral dogs. The Acheri or hill fairies were the ghosts of young female children, who flitted about the tops of mountains, producing wondrous optical illusions among the distant ranges, and descending at dusk to play in the valleys. The deos or demons formed a numerous and malignant class, indeed scarce a village but had its peculiar deo. This phenomenon of ghosts and godlings continues to be operative in parts of Kumaon and even today it is common to hear people professing to have seen spectres and ghosts or evil spirits at night assuming male or female forms, disappearing, and then appearing in some other forms, it may be in the shape of animals and with their appropriate voices. Occasionally they are reported to have apared in hideous gigantic figures, then turning into a misty pilor and vanishing. These are seen by one or more persons, and always at night, preferably when people are alone. They play these trides to,

frighten people . . . . People, therefore, guard against them, and have recourse to the personation and worship of the deities as a safeguard against their influence."<sup>1</sup>

Amongst the most dreaded forms of ghosts is Masan, who is said to exist in places where dead ladies are burnt, generally at the confluence of two rivers. Ghantakaraena, or the bell-eared, who is adored under the form of a water jar, and is supposed to cure skin diseases is another dreaded ghost. His image stands at the entrance to many temples of the greater gods. A similar and equally unedifying legend relates to Ganga Nath, one of the favourite gods of the Doms. He is said to be very young and beautiful. Lower castes propitiate him. The Doms regard him as the chief of their Gods Nirankara, the name meaning the formless. He is treated as a royal deity, though no story of human origin is told concerning him. He becomes incarnate into both men and women. Another strange deity, whose temples are found on mountain summits and in desolate places, is Airi. He is believed to have a third eye and if anyone is seen by him or he sees it, he instantly dies. He is accompanied on his mighty rambles by a troop of goblins in various shapes, and by a pack of hounds with bells attached to their necks. The malignant spirit Rumiya is propitiated in the northern part of Kumaon. He is said to roam at night from village to village on steads formed of huge boulders of stone, whose rambling and clattering noise is heard in darkness and illness. He is of amorous propensities and women who attract his attention pine away, and soon joins him in the spirit land.

Uttarakhand holds irresistible charm for those who want to enter the secret apartment of demonism and Tantra. The strange ceremonies still hold key to many secrets of the strange tantric cults, the interpretation of which is beyond ordinary comprehension.

1. E. D. Atkinson, *Himalayan Gazeteer*.

## KATYUR—THE SWITZERLAND OF INDIA

The moment you cross the Kausani ridge you find yourself face to face with the wide expanse of Himalayan ranges and down below lies the famed Katyur Valley. This valley lies between the course of Saryu and Gomti. This exceedingly beautiful valley was first described into a prosperous settlement by the Katyuris who shifted their capital from Katripur (Joshimath) to Baijnath-Katyar. There is yet another important story about this place which narrates that in good old days there was a big lake in which many evil spirits lived and a vicious demon was living. He made life hell for the people of neighbouring villagers; therefore, villagers gathered and prayed to Brahmari Devi for deliverance—who kept on hovering over the lake with the result that the *rakshasa* was compelled to starvation and as soon as he came out of the lake, he was killed by the Brahmari Devi. She also drained out the lake into Gomati and thus the lake bed became habitable for the locals. With the passage of time, the Katyuri kings also moved in here. Thus the worship of Brahmari Devi has also came into prominence. Now the main shrine of Brahmari is located at a distance of three kilometres from Baijnath. *Pujas* are offered during Chaitra and Baisakh. Childless women come here to pray for children.

They stand holding a lamp in one hand, whole night outside the temple.

Baijnath is also famous because of the legend of Shiva's marriage. There is a group of temples at the site. The temples have pretty carved stones, designs and figures.

### **The legend of Gomati**

There is an interesting legend about the birth of Gomati. In the good old days, there was a man called Atma Ram. His wife was called Dhundhali Bai. She was very beautiful but unfortunately she was unhappy because she was childless. Her husband Atma Ram performed several penances praying for the fertility of his wife. God appeared in the shape of a Sadhu and gave him a fruit which he gave to his wife. Dhundhali was told by some people that childbirth would spoil her beauty; therefore, fearing this, she gave the fruit to the cow for delivering a child; she managed to get the son of her sister for herself who was named Dhundhakari. In the meantime the cow gave birth to a human child with the ears of a cow. Dhundhali brought him home and he was named Gokarna and both grew together but with the passage of time Dhundhakari grew into a cruel person and Gokarna into a God fearing person. Dhundhakari drove away his parents and fell prey to a life of vice and ultimately he was murdered by one of his mistresses. Since no one had performed his last rites, therefore, he turned into a *bhoot*. Gokarna meditated at Badhangari for the deliverance of his brother and his parents. God ultimately became happy and not only liberated Dhundhakari but made a river flow from the place where Gokarna meditated and was named Gokarnawati which is now named Gomati.

### **A journey to the valley**

I undertook the first journey into this part of the Uttarakhand in 1949. I accompanied my father on this trip to Bageshwar from Almora. At that time, the bus used to go only upto Someshwar. The motor journey was also perilous because the road was narrow. From Someshwar, Bageshwar was nearly 23 km. on foot. My father hired a pony for me but I walked almost the entire distance on foot because I did not like the idea of a

ponyride. This trip was very enjoyable. We reached Bageshwar in the evening. Next day we saw the Bazar and the temples. After this visit, how many times I have been to Bageshwar I don't remember except for a trip in which I made halt at Kausani, the most picturesque place which provides a panorama of infinite variety.

Bageshwar is an old town. It houses Vyagreshwar temple about which a story is told that a Sadhu once sat in the bed of Saryu for *tapasya*. The river was blocked due to lack of water in the lower villages, the crops withered. The people got worried and prayed to Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva thought of an ingenious plan; Parvati became a cow and Shiva turned himself into a lion trying to kill the cow. The Sadhu got infuriated and got up to stop the killing due to which the barrier on Gomati was broken and henceforth Lord Shiva came to be known here as Vyagreshwar.



## THE LAND OF FREE LOVE—RANG-BHANG

For going to the fabled village of love, about which I had heard so much, I made up my mind immediately after joining at Dharchula. I left from Dharchula for the valley of Darma. We could travel by motor - road upto Tawaghat and from here the path lay all along the Darma gad (river). We first made a brief halt at Kue from where constant climb started for Sobala. At Sobala good apples grow in abundance. Two miles beyond Sobala is Dar which has also a hot spring. Recently, this place was in news because of its sinking tendency. From Dar one may approach Gori Chhal by Gavan Dhura passing through Chiplakot lakes. Dar to Nagling, the route is interesting and passes through thick forests. The medicinal plant called Soma 'Mentha' which is used for the treatment of asthma is found here in abundance. The journey from Nagling to Dukhdu—the trouble giver—is enjoyable. Opposite Dukhdu lies the villages of Bon and Filma. Dukhdu lies at the footsteps of Pancha-Chuli mountain, a group of five peaks which rise straight into the sky forming a massive wall of ice and snow. According to local traditions the five peaks are known as five stalls of the Gods—"Chuli".

### **Strange custom—Rang-Bhang**

Although marriages are universally arranged through the parents of parties concerned, yet practically the universal custom of the three pattiis, Darma, Byas and Chaudans, is to arrange marriage at the Rang-Bhang, which is the village club; in every village, a house or some spot is set apart, which is called Rambangkuri, or place of the Rambhang, at which men and women meet and spend the night singing lewd songs, smoking and drinking. Married and unmarried men go there, also single women and married women upto the time their first child is born. Girls start going to Rambhang from early age and practically never sleep at home. The confusing growth of illegitimate children and frequent miscarriage is not quite uncommon.

One is always sure of getting hospitable welcome. When the Bhotias are travelling or go to their winter quarters one of the first considerations is to set apart some spot for the Rambhang. If girls wish to visit the boys of a neighbouring village to meet them, they wave long sheets, one girl holding one end and another the another end. This waving singal can be seen from miles and is really a pretty custom. It is also used in bidding farewell to friends and lovers, and is frequently accompanied by whistling two fingers being placed in the mouth as in the whistling catcalls of downtown boys playing hide and seek. On hearing the whistles the girls take a little fire and issue forth from their homes and proceed with the boys to the chosen spot, and, if they are old friends, they sit side by side round a burning fire, otherwise all the boys sit on one side and the girls face them. Often the girls dance, while boys join them, indulging in singing of lewd songs, smoking and drinking until they are all weary, when sleep brings quiet at the height of sensual ecstasy to the scene.

### **Happy go lucky**

The Bhotia is a wise and cautious trader and circumspect in all his dealings. He never allows passion of the moment to overrule the valour he attaches to a powerful alliance through matrimony with a rich neighbour family, and, therefore, in almost all cases a young man takes his parents into confidence with regard to the object of his affections. After due consideration the young man, either personally or through his friends, offers the girl a sum

of money, varying according to his own financial status. Normally, the finance is not directly approached, instead through intimate associates called *taram* (key). The lady conveys her reply through her parents in the form of either retaining the gift or returning it.

### No marriage on Monday

The Bhotia women have complete liberty in exercising their preference in marriage and many women have remained unmarried because they could not find suitable match.

A marriage ceremony never takes place on Monday which is considered inauspicious. In fixing a day for the marriage, Monday is carefully avoided, as that is universally considered an unlucky day, and although the date thus fixed is wellknown to both the families, a pretence is always kept up that the girl's parents are not going to let her go willingly.

A pretence is always kept up that the prospective bride will never go voluntarily. There is some semblance of force. On the day fixed for marriage, the boy visits the girl and pretends to take her forcibly but often this pretension results in the exchange of mock fight and the father of the bridegroom byola invites the bridegroom's friends for a feast at night and issues formal instructions to them. The party proceeds to the bride's (byolo) village under cover of darkness. Arriving at the village, they go to Rambhang and carry the bride in their arms for a short distance, where they call the bride's maids and then proceed to the bridegroom's village. On arriving in front of the bridegroom's house they are given drinks. On entering the house the first of the ceremonies begins, the village elders present their Dalangs or cones of dough with liquor which are given to the bride and the bridegroom for eating and drinking. This is followed by drinking bouts which may even last for a fortnight, each family of relations taking it in turns to entertain the bridal party and liquor is distributed until "a man is bathed in drink" and the whole village becomes a pandemonium of drunken men and women.

The second ceremony, the formal rite of Datu, follows. Dough and fish are given to the bridegroom and the bride who exchange with each other. This ceremony binds them in wedlock. In

the meanwhile, the groom's men have been lavishing their care and hospitality on the bride's maids who are then allowed to go home. They are in turn invited to the bride's village. It sometimes happens that a girl is carried in reality by force from the Rambhang but unless and until she eats "Dalang", "Datu" and drinks liquor with her captor she is not considered to be married.

### **End of a marriage**

Divorce in a society of free love prevails in abundance. It is a very simple process. The man, however, has an upper hand. If a man wishes to be separated from his wife, all that he has to do is to ask her to leave him. To quote Sherring "In divorcing a woman, the husband gives her a piece of white cloth. The cloth is invariably white, the idea being to give her, and her children, by any subsequent marriage, purity and legitimacy. Until the cloth is given, no divorce has taken place; in fact, should a man elope with another man's wife he is shoe beaten and his goats and sheep stolen from him with their packs, while the children are considered illegitimate." A girl thus marries any number of times. Thus the chances of staying together are very fickle.

## THE WAY TO HEAVEN

In the patti of Byas and Chandans cremation follows death immediately, but in Darma patti burning follows death, immediately, but in some patti burning takes place only in the month of Kartik, i. e. once in a year, and corpse are interned in the ground during the interval and are exhumed in Kartik for cremation. The Bhotias of Darma Pargana, speak of the funeral ceremonies as 'Gwan', but they are known amongst the western Bhotias by the term 'Dhurung'.

### **The elaborate death ceremony**

The death ceremonies are more elaborate and interesting. A distinction is made between small children and grownups. Those children who have not outgrown their milk teeth are buried, the head placed northwards. Others who are older are cremated. The dead body is placed on a white log. The log with the body is then placed on a bier. To the front of the bier is tied a white cloth, cotton if the deceased is a man, and woollen, if a woman. The significance of tying the cloth is that the spirit of the deceased can be guided forthwith in the next world. The cloth is known as 'Amlugara', 'Am' meaning way and 'Lugara' cloth.

The funeral procession is led by a young boy or a girl, who

holds fire in hand in the form of burning faggots, followed by women and then the bier and finally the villagers carrying fuel for the cremation which is held by the side of the stream. At the pyre, the clothes belonging to the deceased are placed among the faggots to be burnt and the corpse is placed in such a way that it faces the east. Before it is burnt, the cloth bag is slit and a piece of precious metal put into the mouth of the deceased, to ensure that the corpse is purified.

On the following day, some people proceed to the burning place and collect bones of the deceased, which are taken to a place in the village where the bones of dead persons are interred. Water and flowers are sprinkled on the ground by the girl and a hole is dug in the ground where bones are interred with its case and in the words of Sherring "After this, four corners, four feet apart, like boundary pillars, and the tops are joined by three threads of different colours, i.e. red, white and yellow. Next, immediately above the interred bones, a forked stick is placed in the ground, from one end is suspended a gourd full of water. Below the gourd is a place with flour covered with butter, and as there is a small hole in the bottom of the gourd, water drops continuously on the food beneath." The idea behind this ceremony is that the spirit of the departed should not suffer from thirst or hunger. The same night, a funeral feast is given and a special provision of food is made for the departed person.

### **Dhurang ceremony**

The last ceremony is Dhurang, also known as Gwan ceremony. This ceremony was universally performed among all the Bhotias in the past but Hindu influence has eliminated it among some of them, particularly among Bhotias of Niti, Mana and Johar. In this ceremony an animal plays a prominent part, sometimes a Yak or Jhibbu is chosen, or a goat or sheep. The forehead, back and tail of the animal is marked white, the sex of the animal represents the sex of the deceased. An old man who is supposed to have mystic powers, and who is acquainted with future life is present. It is his duty to instruct the spirit of the deceased to do or not to do certain things which would ensure that it reached heaven.

I witnessed this elaborate ceremony being performed at Gunji,

while on a visit to that area. The ceremony lasted four days. On the first day the animal was taken outside the village where the deceased's clothes are tied to it. Then barley is strewn over the animal and the old spirits are beseeched not to take the food belonging to the deceased. On the second day, nothing of importance takes place, but on the third day, the animal is taken to the place where the bones of the dead are interred. The casket containing the bones is taken out and strict privacy is ensured while doing this by erecting a screen round the area where the casket had been buried. The case is then put in the "Ghost" boots. A procession is formed and on reaching the village, the animal is fed and the case containing the bones brought into the deceased's house, alongwith his clothes. Once again, the old man with mystic powers gives detailed advice to the deceased as to what he should do to reach the gate of heaven. The men and women dance round the animal and often the animal is killed. The departure of the animal signifies the departure of the spirit. The rituals end with the breaking of the deceased into two, one half is buried at some lofty place and the other half taken to a sacred place. So ends the strange ceremony.

Whatever the history of a race, and whatever the changes in life due to migration and a variation of surroundings, practices such as Gwan which relate to some of the important events of life, drew their source from ancient times when the race under review lived with those which are now extinct or are in distant places. Now it can be truly studied only on their original context and previous surroundings.



## HARI KI DOON—THE VALLEY OF GODS

One route from Barakote proceeds towards Purola via Naugaon. Naugaon is now fast coming up as an idyllic setting for apple gardening. From here, while one route leads towards Kalsi in Yamuna valley, another route goes upto Purola, Jarmola, Netwar, Tiuni and on to Simla.

Purola is a small township which is still steeped in tradition. It holds gateway to famed Jaunsar and Fatehpur-Bagan area. The interesting area of Rawain-Sirayain and Kamal Sirayain lies enroute to Jaraula (6300 ft.) where a big apple garden has been developed amidst thick deodar, pine and rhodendron forests.

Another route to the Hari Ki Doon or the Valley of Gods lies through Dehradun, Kalsi, Chakrata, Tiuni and from there to Netwar.

### **The trek to Hari Ki Doon**

Netwar is the starting point for a journey to Hari Ki Doon. Netwar is 26 km. by jeep from Purola. Another route to Netwar lies through Chakrata, Deoban (9503 ft.) and Ringali (7309 ft.). From Netwar, the trek to Hari ki Doon lies all along the Tons which flows in broad, shallow rapids, sometimes, shining

and sparkling and at other times gathering its water in dark steep pools under lofty overhanging rocks. Taluqwa (6700 ft.) is twenty kms. from here, and next stop Osla to Hari Ki Doon is (11700 ft.) 11 kms. The entire trek is filled with the scent of sweet wild flowers which mingled with the odour of deodar makes a pungent effect over the nostrils and when wearied traveller ultimately lands at Hari Ki Doon, he is greeted with magnificent display of flowers from the nature's garden and herbs as described in the pages of Dhanwantari Nighantu and Charak Samhita.

This place is also rich in wild animals. In the alpine pastures, musk deer is found. This three feet long and two feet high animal has varying shades of colour which it changes with the season. The male musk deer has a musk pod situated between the shin of the body and the abdominal viscera. The production of musk in this gland is due to the secretion as a shin pot in animal producing secretion has a musky odour. In Dhanwantari Nighantu, musk has been called as Kasturi, Mriga Nabhi, Mriga Meda and Mukhaja. It is also called Yojana-Gandhi, containing about three tolas of the size of a lemon in a full grown animal. It is believed to be the content of a umbilical knot.

### **The people**

Hari Ki Doon is situated in Panchgain-Fatehparvat area of Garhwal. It has been thus described by Sri Paripoornanand Pinuli : "The configuration of Panchgain-Fatehparvat hemmed by the sinuous Tons and other rivulets rather deprive them of irrigation and still ingeniously do they husband their terraced fields and rear sheep, the mainstay of their life." The inhabitants of this valley, though having identical values in work, deed and thought with their counterparts in Jaunsar and Rawanin, claim descent from the Kauravas. In fact, they are the only people who worship Duryodhana and still there are a number of temples dedicated to him and year after year his one-legged idol is taken out in procession in a palanquin from village to village where the arrival of the God is heralded with merry making and fanfare. Another God who is assiduously worshipped is Pakhu or sheep God who inspires them to steal sheeps and goats from nearby herds and feast on them.

The inhabitants of Fatehparvat, like their counterparts in Jaunsar, still follow the example of their ancestors and live in a polyandrous society where wives are priced and exchanged freely. But it is strange that in spite of widespread polyandry, the family ties are bounded and glued together and have thus helped in keeping the population under check and arresting the fragmentation of land which is already so scarce.

The condition of women is worse due to polyandry and excessive physical toil.

The people of this Gods Valley are still steeped in superstition, orthodoxy, disease and sexual complication which has accounted for poor education and consequential backwardness.

Now, with the wave of new roads reaching distant places, civilisation is knocking at their doors, and the day is not far when Hari Ki Doon will be easily approachable and accessible to all.



## THE HIGH LAND FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

In all agricultural countries, especially where communication is difficult, and where the land is cut by mountains or water, the need is felt for periodical meetings at convenient centres, where exchange and sale of commodities may take place. The interior parts of Uttarakhand are absolutely dependent on these occasional fairs and festivals for their supply of common necessities. These meeting places also provide ample opportunity for the women to wear the best of their attire and enjoy the dance sequences which take place either amongst themselves or as provided by the Hurak and Hurkiyani. I had ample opportunity to visit and participate in some of the fairs of Uttarakhand out of which I would like to describe the joyous moods of a few.

### **Uttareni—Bageshwar**

The best known and largest fair of Kumaon is Uttareni held at Bageshwar, each year around second week of January.

The town of Bageshwar is situated on the confluence of Saryu and Gomati, thus the junction of two rivers makes it an important centre of pilgrimage. At the junction of the holy rivers stands a large temple with its conical towers, better known as

'Vyagreswar', the 'Tiger Lord', an epithet used for Lord Shiva. The temple was erected by Lakshami Chand about 1450 A. D.

Lot of trading is done on the banks of *Sangam* (junction) while most of the *yatris* take a dip and thus propitiate and worship Lord Shiva.

At the earliest light of dawn, multitudes of devotees step down to the river where they wash away their sins and prepare themselves sin-free for another year.

The curios and rarities can still be picked up at Bageshwar which has a long reputation in India.

### **Thal Mela**

Another important fair of Kumaon is Thal Mela which is held at the temple of Baleshwar near Thal in the second week of April. People from different parts of Kumaon gather here to join the festivities and pay respectful regards at the feet of Lord Baleshwar.

### **Bagwali—the stone throwing festival**

Another strange custom once widely prevalent in the Himalayas, and still practised annually at a few places in Kumaon, especially at Melas or fairs, is the Bagwali or stone throwing festival. It is said to have been introduced originally from Nepal, where one of the kings named Gunkan drew up a strict code of rules for the sport. In fact, in Nepal, it resembled actual warfare : the men of rival villages or districts used to fight fiercely, and the prisoners taken on either side were offered as sacrifices to the Goddess Kali. In Kumaon, however, it assumed a milder form, and parties on either side defended a passage over a river, or similar place. A relic of the custom is still to be witnessed at Devidhura, about 25 miles east of Almora. A stone throwing contest takes place between the inhabitants of some rival villages. Two factions range themselves opposite each other and arm themselves with a leather shield to protect themselves. The fight takes place to appease the Goddess Kali.

This fair attracts large number of people from the neighbouring areas.

### Nanda Devi

Nanda is a favourite goddess in Kumaon, and her birthday, the Nandashtami, in the month of Bhado (August-September) is an occasion of great rejoicing. There is a large fair and concourse of people at Almora, when a young buffalo is sacrificed in the precincts of the goddess's temple. The first blow is struck with a *kukhri*, a short, broad, and heavy sword, by the descendant of the Almora Rajas, and then the animal is despatched as a offering. This fair takes place in different parts of Almora with great fanfare and rejoicing. If one can adjust his trip to either Nainital or Almora, he can certainly enjoy the best of Kumaon and its fairs and festivals.

### The Gauchar Mela

In Garhwal, the biggest fair is Gauchar which takes place in the month of November. Gauchar is on the Rishikesh-Badrinath road in Chamoli district. A ground is available there, thus providing a large area for holding the fair.

People from different parts of Garhwal and even Kumaon gather here to sell their wares and display their achievements in the field of arts and crafts. I had an opportunity of actively associating in this fair successively for three years. The colourful gathering of men and women from different walks of life is really a scene to remember. Here army, police, civilian administration and locals actively join hands. One can see perfect fusion of all departments.

Cultural programmes and various other entertainments also take place at the fair ground.

### The Hurak and Hurkiyani—the dancing tune

An unforgettable feature of Himalayan phenomenon is the unending beat of Hurak (a small drum) and the untiring rhythmic movement of the feet of Hurkiyani who aids lustre to every celebration, fair and festival.

*DAM...DAM...DIM...DIM...DAM...DA*

I had the first chance of listening to a Hurkiyani probably at the age of six, maybe seven. She was dancing and singing a song which I came to know, years after, as Tituren—a love

song at the time of change of season :

*Ayo basant phagun chait ko bhagi holo apnan mayat,  
Timli ko pat no khayo bhat  
Na anni chithi na kusalpatt,  
Ayo basant phagun chait ko bhagi, holo apnan mayat.*

It was explained to me that it was part of Riturena (the seasonal song) which meant—

'The Spring has arrived, but  
Here I am away from my kith and kin.  
Lucky are they who are enjoying choice  
Dishes at their parents' homes'.

The Hurkiyas invariably accompany the Hurkiyani with a small drum called 'Huraka' which resembles 'damru'. The Huraka is made from the skins of monkeys which are acquired from the Harijans.

The Hurkiya songs are transmitted from generation to generation and they are almost the same all over entire Uttarakhand, except with little local variations. The theme of these songs are normally love, eulogies of past kings and princes, hymns in praise of local kings, the change of season.

In the history of the dancing girls of Uttarakhand, the mention of a class known as Nayaks is but natural because most of the Hurkiyas and Hurkiyanis came from their families. The Nayaks owed their origin to the campaign of Raja Bharti Chand (1437-1459) against Nainka Raja of Doti. In these long drawn campaigns the Kumaon soldiers developed temporary alliances with the women of Doti. The descendants of these temporary marriages were not admitted into any caste and came to be known as Khadagwals or the children of swords. They were also named as Nayaks, implying the descendants of a Nayika, meaning mistress. The female offspring usually took to dancing and many of them found way into the houses of prostitution. These Nayaks lived in separate villages or areas marked for them as Nayakana. With the passage of time the practice of Nayika girls became so corrupted that government had to intervene and two bills called 'Protection of Nayak girls' and the 'Protection of minor girls' were passed by the U. P. State Legislation Assembly vide their Gazette No. 2 and 8 of 1929. The District Magistrate was given

vast powers for investigation and punishment in order to put a stop to the evil practice.

Hurkiya bol, occasionally combined lewd dancing with tingling bangles and jingling bells but now it has developed a grace and also some film style in the gesticulation of hip swinging Hurkiyani. The dance movement for the best song starts with the sinuous slightly feline elegance. A pair of piercing eyes tends to show precarious experience in all that adds to a woman's strength. The girls spread longing with every delicate movement of the arm and tone of the singing voice. When I think of their love songs, I am reminded of one such dance sequence at Lilam, while on way to Millam.

### **The rhythm of joy**

Hurkiya bol can be heard best at the time of sowing or harvesting season in Katyur valley where the old traditions still persist. The local gods are invoked to shower best of crops through prayers, singing and dancing. The Hurkiyas are thus much in demand before the transplantation starts in the paddy fields in order to propitiate Bhumiyal. The women divide themselves into groups and start transplanting, while the Hurkiya continues to sing with the rhythmic play of hurak. At times the lilting tunes set the feet of the planters tapping, and sometimes the entire group is carried away by the gay mood. The tune charms the whole valley and entire Uttarakhand—

*Hito Diti Hito Bhina*

*Hito Hito Ne Bhina*

*Hito Hito Myala Mien*

*Hito Didi Hito Bhina.*



## FLORA AND FAUNA OF UTTARAKHAND

The Himalayan phenomenon of flora and fauna has been rightly described by Salim Ali in these words : "One of the things that makes trekking in the Himalayas so particularly delightful is surely the constant change in the character of the plants and birds that one meets as one climbs higher and higher, and passes from one zone of altitude to another."

The controlling effect of mountain chains and hill ranges on local climate and vegetation, and, therefore, on the distribution of animal life, is wellknown. The Himalayas stretches across our northern frontier like a gigantic wall, cutting off the Indian plains of the Gangetic valley from the high plateau of Tibet and Central Asia. They bar the northward passage of the moisture laden wind currents, driven up seasonally from the south-west through the Indian Sea and Bay of Bengal to the land beyond. This character offers an outstanding example of the role that mountain ranges play in the character and local distribution of animal life and vegetation. Botanists have long remarked upon the general similarity of the flora of the higher slopes of such widely separated mountain ranges as the Himalayas, the Nilgiris and other hills of south-west India.

Truely, the Himalayas exercise profound influence on the

climate of the sub-continent, as it has had in its past politic history. As an impassable barrier to the north, the Himalayas act as a climate divide, effecting the air and water circulation system of the region. What we receive as a monsoon rain is largely because of the orographic influence of the Himalayas on the Monsoon winds. All this and other factors have affected the flora and fauna of the region which can be best studied by taking Uttarakhand as sample of Himalayan flora and fauna.

### Himalayan flora

The variegated nature of Himalayan flora has been best described elsewhere in this book. However, it may be recalled that Uttarakhand has nearly 23000 square miles of forest which is gradually diminishing as a result of which Himalayan fauna has also been badly affected because a forest is a source for 'shelter and shade, fruit and flower, fodder and fuel'. We are causing our own destruction.

The significance of the fauna of Himalayas can be best described from the following sloka of Gita—

ब्रह्मवस्यात्मि दैत्यानां कालः कलवतामहम् ।  
मृगणा यं मृगेन्द्रो अहं बैनतेयश्य पक्षिनाम् ॥ 30 ॥

that is—

Among Daityas, I am Prahalad, among  
Calculators, I am mighty time, among  
Animals, I am tiger and among the birds  
I am Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu.

Uttarakhand is house of many wild animals and birds. Such as the 'khakor', barking deer, the 'ghural' or Indian Chamois, the wild bear and occasionally a boar or leopard, not to mention the Himalayan partridge 'chakor' and pheasants of different kinds, the finest of which is 'monal,' with its splendid blue tint. I saw hundreds of them at Nagling (9500 ft.) during my winter halt at winter post of the special police force. Occasionally 'himal' is sighted above 14000 ft. We saw some of them at Vasukital. In the high Himalayas, snow leopard is found ever alert. His toes are well adapted for stalking on the snow. The hoofed animal produces crunchy sounds but the well padded and sheathed feet and toes of the snow leopard glide almost without

a sound or a dimple in the snow.

As per scientific exploration carried out by Salim Ali, bird families endemic to the Himalayas, not found in peninsular India, are broadbills (*Enrylae midae*), honey guides (*Indica Tordae*), finfoots (*Heliorinthidee*), and parrot bills.

Another interesting aspect of Himalayan fauna is musk deer which is at the verge of extinction due to the musk which it carries in its gland which is used in some perfumes and is considered a aphrodisiac. The poor animal is hunted for this musk pod. Although killing is banned but clandestine trade goes on.

### **The tiger of Jim Corbett**

The terror which a man-eating tiger or leopard imposes in the area of its activity is unequalled even by severest of curfews. The scene of a terror-stricken village and the deadly movements of a tiger have been best described by Jim Corbett. In fact, the scene is the same because during the hours of sunlight life in that area is carried in normal way but as the sun approaches western horizon and the shadows are lengthened, the behaviour of the entire population undergoes a noticeable change and when night falls an ominous silence grips the entire area.

A tiger's function in the scheme of things is to help maintain the balance in nature and if, on rare occasions when driven by dire necessity, he kills a human being, or when his natural food has been ruthlessly exterminated by man he kills two percent of the cattle he is alleged to have killed, it is not fair that for these acts a whole species be branded as blood thirsty. Today the population of tiger has gone down due to poachers and annually there is an appreciable addition to the death toll.

### **Wild life sanctuaries**

With an intent to protect natural life, the government has opened several sanctuaries in the Himalayas out of which Jim Corbett National Park and Rajaji Sanctuary in the Terai of Himalayas are most famous. I have already described the high altitude Nanda Devi sanctuary. Therefore, for the benefit of my readers, let me describe the Jim Corbett Sanctuary which is internationally wellknown.

### **Jim Corbett Park**

The Corbett National Park is situated in Pathi Doon, the valley of river Ram Ganga. At the decline of the Moghal power in India, Patli Doon was the meeting ground of the clashing interests of the Rohillas. This area of historical significance came into importance in 1935 when Sir John Hewitt, Governor of U. P. indicated that tigers were in plentiful in the area adjoining Patli Doon. In 1935, the Government of United Provinces built the Hailey National Park after the name of the Governor of United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Sir Malcolm Hailey. The park was renamed Ramganga National Park in 1948 and in 1957, the name of the park was changed, to Jim Corbett National Park. The park covers an area of 528.8 sq. kilometres and lies at an altitude of 400 metres.

### **The route**

The National Park can today be entered from any of the two entrances, Dhangadi entrance to the east lying astride the main Ramnagar-Ranikhet road and Kalagarh entrance to the west which is astride the forest road joining Ramnagar and Kotdwar. A complex hydro-electric project is located at Kalagarh on the Ramganga. The major routes of entry to this sanctuary lie as follows—

- (i) *Delhi-Garhmukteshwar—Moradabad—Kashipur—Ramnagar—Dhangadi :*

This route is approximately two hundred and fortyfive kilometres long. The last petrol pump is at Ramnagar.

- (ii) *Bareilly—Rampur—Kashipur—Ramnagar—Dhangadi :*

This route can be adopted by visitors from the east. From Bareilly, it is 180 kms. just 5 kms. Short of Moradabad, the road bifurcates for Ramnagar.

- (iii) *Nainital—Haldwani—Kaladhungi—Ramnagar—Dhangadi :*

It is approximately one hundred and twenty kilometres. The stretch between Kaladhungi and Ramnagar is a gravel road. This road journey is fascinating because Jim Corbett frequented it during his stay in the Kaladhungi.

*(iv) Kotedwar—Nazimabad—Dhampur—Kalagarh :*

This route is approximately eighty kilometres long. The petrol pump is at Kalagarh. A gravel forest connects Kotedwar with Kalagarh.

Accommodation and eatables are available at many places, though one should be prepared to rough it out a little. Facilities for cooking, crockery etc. exist in the rest house and the guest house.

### **The fauna**

A variety of animals and birds can be seen in the park. With little luck one can see the elephant, tiger, panther, bear, large Indian antelope, sambhar, spotted deer, barking deer, wild boar, monkeys, porcupine, mongoose, crocodile, gharial (long snouted crocodile) and pythons. The jungle noise mixed with the roar of lions speaks of the richness and variety of fauna. Birds of different variety sing in a crescendo and then abruptly stop off creating a resonant silence. The occasional call of the pea fowl pierces the still night to great distances. At times peculiar laughter of the hyena is heard. At intervals, the colony of monkeys kicks up a deafening noise. You can perceive the panther on the prowl, shaking the trees, the violent movement of the colony to the higher branches gain momentum as the big cat comes near and then as the tiger leaves the ground the noise slows down.

A variety of birds can also be seen in the park. A guide is very useful to help identify the birds and beasts. Some of the prominent birds that are seen at the park are babbler, bulbul, crow, pheasant, paradise, fly catcher, flower pecker, golden wood pecker, hornbill, snipe, robin, magpie, lark, oriole, pea-cock, laughing-thrush, quail, sand piper, wrbler, white stork (Haji lak lak), scavenger, vulture, black patridge, Himalayan wood owl, common hawk, cuckoo or the brown fever bird (pipiha).

In spite of the depredations of poachers, the Corbett Park is still a place where animals are free and safe.

### **Call for protecting the flora and fauna of the Himalayas**

A clarion call has been given to protect the flora and fauna of the Himalayas which has been reflected in the passing of the

amended Forest Act and the Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972 (Act No. 53 of 1972). Establishment of new parks and expansion of old parks is being taken up but no Government measure can fully succeed unless the people themselves resolve to stop the wanton destruction of nature.

## RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF UTTARAKHAND

This part of the country is most sacred to the Hindus including those following Buddhism and Sikhism, and appealing as it does with its awful solemnity and weird grandeur of landscape to all that is romantic in the human soul, which makes it the fit abode of the great gods of Hinduism and Buddhism. Buddha alongwith Indian legendary Gods and Goddesses have left traces of their greatness at various places. It is to Kedarnath and Badrinath in the everlasting snows that they point as the home of their gods, where gods lived. Mount Kailash is considered the perpetual home of the Shiva.

### **Worship of Shiva**

It was in the holy mountains of this part of the Himalaya that the great Shiva is described as having dallied with the wives of seven Rishis, or sages, who are the stars of the constellation Ursa Major, and for this he was cursed that his *ling* should fill the whole earth. He accordingly flung down his ling on these very mountains and hence the origin of phallic worship.

The marriage of Shiva with the daughter of Himanchal forms the basis of many a folklore which describes the nuptial attire in truly awesome detail. "The Mahadeo smeared his body with

ashes, and threw over his shoulders the skin of deer, and adorned himself with snakes instead of jewels, and took the Trisul, or trident, in his hand and wearing a necklace of dead men's skulls, and seated on a bull, came to the marriage". And so the legends and tales go on, quaint in themselves, yet of absorbing interest, when we realise that these form the mantle of mystery which forever hangs round these sublime mountains, in the minds of the millions of worshippers who live in every part of India but throng to Himalayas in search of the "the true, the good and the beautiful".

### **The spread of Buddhism**

The spread of Buddhism in the Himalayas is a wellknown fact. The Ceylonese Buddhist chronicle gives the names of missionaries sent to Kashmir, to Gandhara and to the 'Himalayas'. Five missionaries were sent to the Himalayan region and the three are named as Majjhima, Kassappagotta and Dundhubissara. When the brick built mounds or "tops" at Sanchi in Central India were opened by Cunningham some funeral urns were found with inscription, and one of these bore the legend "of the good man, Kassapa Gotta, the teacher of all the Himalayan region". On the inside of the urn is written "of the good man Majjhima". In another tope was an urn inscribed "of the goodman Gotiputta of the Himalaya, successor of Dundubhissara". The discovery of these urns at Sanchi goes to show that there has been a custom amongst the Buddhists to distribute portion of the ashes of holy men to different places, where they were treasured by the community, and topes were built over them.

After the entry of Aryans in India, the simple teaching of the Saivites was soon overwhelmed with the entry of brahmanism which worshipped pantheon of Gods and Goddesses. Thus arose a peculiar caste of priests, which not only arrogated to itself the first place in society, but soon Buddhism also made its headway in the interiors of Himalayas, particularly amongst the Bhotias. Buddhism was, in fact, a protest against caste privileges, ritualism, and priestly tyranny, and answered the worship of a multiplicity of Gods, extending to thousands, nay, millions, by the altruistic doctrine which denied that there were gods. For years, Brahmanism and Buddhism contested the

field for supremacy, and in time the former gave place to the latter but soon this short lived glory was blown away by the increasing growth of Tantrik cults both within the Brahmanism and Buddhism. What has been described above as the Bon religion of Tibet had its counterpart in India in the horrible and diabolical worship known as the Tantrik cult which revelled in obscenity, immorality, lust and all forms of wickedness and even in murder and human sacrifice, setting up for itself goddesses of revolting form and of abominable character, such as Kali, Durga, Chandi. They believed in five M's of meat of fish, meat of flesh, madness of wine, mating sexually with women and mystic mummery.

### The visit of the Huen Tsang

Huen Tsang visited this part of the country in 634 A. D. and proceeded from Thaneshwar to Strughana in Saharanpore and across the Ganges to Madawar in the Bijnore district. He described Mayura and Mayapur close to Haridwar. He has also given vivid description of his journey to Po-no-ki-mo-pore-lo or Brahmapore, which lay 50 miles north of Madawar. Cunningham was the first to place Brahmapore in Garhwal about which he observed that the western bearing is certainly erroneous, as it would have carried the pilgrim across the Ganges and trek again into Strughana. We must, therefore, tread north-east, the direction that once formed the famous kingdom of Katyuris. Besides this kingdom the Chinese traveller described another kingdom which was known as Son-fa-la-na-kie-Tn-Co or Suvarnagotra, because gold of superior quality was produced here. The kingdom was ruled by a woman. It touched Tibetan country in the east, Khotan in the North and SAN-Po-Ho-OR-Lampha (Himachal Pradesh) in the west. This description fits with the kingdom of Katyuris which had its capital at Joshimath or Kartipura. However, it is just possible that the Brahmapura of Huen Tsang was the Barahut in Uttarkashi district. Some scholars have suggested certain other locations including Dr. Goetz who takes it to be Chamba, a theory which does not corroborate with the description of the Chinese traveller. The reference to Suvarnagotra or 'gold country' has been taken by Goetz to be for Santhal in Tibet. Atkinson placed it to the north of Ganai

in the valley of Gori. There is no doubt that the valley of Gori is Jauhar in which Millam is situated which had considerable population and commanded large trade with Tibet. Herodotus, the Greek writer, also mentions the city of Kaspatyuris in the extreme north "where men are sent forth to procure gold". This legendary ant gold 'Paipilika' was collected till recently at Karanprayag. Thus the ancient Katyuri kingdom can also be placed somewhere nearby.

As regards the woman ruler, it is known that the only woman heir of Kartipura was married by Kanakpal of Gujrat in 17th century A. D. and later on he shifted to Katripur and called himself 'Suvarna gotri' because his land delivered gold.

During this period of history, in the lower hills, prevailed the kingdom of Govisana which has been identified by M. Julien as Kiu-Pi-Shwang-Wa of Huen Tsang which has been described by him as a town of two and half miles in circumference and was full of Stups and temples. This capital town was somewhere near present Kashipore.

Considering the history of Kumaon and Garhwal as taken from internal sources, it will be well to refer to the evidence of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Huen Tsang, who in 634 A. D. passed through northern India, and has left an itinerary of his travels giving most important and relevant facts regarding the condition and tradition of the country.

Huen Tsang's account shows both Buddhism and Brahmanism were flourishing side by side, and apparently are on fairly friendly terms, in the Himalayan region. Buddhism in the Himalayas was suppressed when Shankara came into limelight.

### **Contemporary religious points in Uttarakhand**

The traditional beliefs continue to hover over the minds of Hindus of high Himalayas but with the change of time a stance of modernity has entered in their faiths. The age-old fanatic cults and belief in the pastoral gods and goddesses is dying. In fact, even amongst the Bhotias of northern Indian borderland, the age-old customs and religious beliefs are just disappearing and its place is being taken by more sophisticated and modernised Hindu beliefs.

It is interesting to note that Bhotias have been left, ever since,

untouched by the influences at work on both sides of them, viz., in Tibet and India. In fact, it speaks volumes for their character that although they have been for centuries in constant touch with Tibet for business purposes, they have never absorbed into their own simple religion the extravagances of Hinduism or demonology of Lamaism of Tibet.

It is significant that while rest of India was reeling under the effects of Islamic expansion and conversion, the Himalayan kingdoms remained safe from the foreign inroads and Islamic influence as a result of which most of the religious beliefs that exist in Uttarakhand are of original character, some of which have already been described elsewhere in this book at appropriate places.



## A JOURNEY INTO THE INVINCIBLE NANDA DEVI SANCTUARY

Nanda Devi, hidden amidst icy ranges of Kumaon Himalayas, has long been worshipped as one of the holiest mountains in India. It is a twin peaked mountain (7823 mtrs.). It is inaccessible both by reason of its towering height and steep ridges. It is defended by a ring of impassable mountains, with a circumference of 112 kms. and least depression not less than 5486 mtrs. Mr. Huge Rutledge bestowed the name "sanctuary" to this enclosed undulating high tableland. In shape, the sanctuary is like a gigantic horse shoe, with an opening narrowed into a neck towards the west through which Rishi Ganga flows.

For the fifty years, the problem of reaching the sanctuary engaged the attention of experienced mountaineers but the Goddess Nanda Devi retained her secret. It was only in 1934 that Shipton and Tillman at last succeeded in entering through the Rishi Gorge. The same year, in the month of September, they made a second ascent and spent three weeks exploring the sanctuary. Shipton had expected the sanctuary to be full of dull looking grey moraines but was surprised to find it a place of great beauty with extensive areas of rich pasturage gay with flowers.

The sanctuary was again visited in July 1936 by an Anglo-

American team under the leadership of Tillman and the latter alongwith Odell succeeded in reaching the top of Nanda Devi. In 1951, a French party, under the leadership of Roger Duplat attempted the traverse of formidable stretch, 3 kms. in length which links east and west summits of Nanda Devi. Duplat and Vignes lost their lives in this venture. In the year 1974 on 13th June, two members of the Indo-Japanese team succeeded in traversing the ridge connecting east Nanda Devi and north Nanda Devi.

In 1957 Major Nandu Juyal and a German party made unsuccessful attempts on Nanda Devi. A party under the leadership of Gurdayal Singh entered the inner sanctuary in 1960 with the object of traversing the Rishi Gorge and climb Devisthan peak in the western rim of the sanctuary. In 1961, two sherpas of the expedition climbed the peak of Nanda Devi.

### The exploration

While I was in Chamoli I had the privilege of launching expedition parties of Nainital Mountaineering Club from time to time. One such party was led by Anup Shah which left Nainital on 13th September 1974 and reached Lata on 15th September after a day's halt at Joshimath. Lata is a fairly large village of about 50-60 houses. At a distance of nearly 10 kms. ahead from Lata, the party could find the medicinal and aromatic plants like Salampanja (*Orchis latifolia*), Kutki (*Picrorhize Kurroa*), Atees (*Aconitum heterophyllum*), Jambu (*Allium Sp.*), Jatamasi (*Nardostachys Jatamasi*), Vish (*Aconituns Atrox*), Gandaryan (*Angelica glauca*) and Guggul and Takkar could be collected from the alpine meadows, such as Poling, Jeppur and Lata Kharak.

The party left for Dibrugheta early in the morning of 17th September. The weather was foggy and as we reached Bakhini Dhar, it started raining. The plants observed on the way were *saussurea obvalata* (*Brahma Kamal*) and Takkar, and umbelliferous plant. From Bakhini Dhar the party reached Dharansi Dhar through Satkula Dhar and Ranikhola. From Dharansi Dhar (4500 mtrs.) there is a steep descent of about 400 mtrs. to Dibrugheta. The party reached Dibrugheta in the night and bivouched there, as the porters carrying loads reached

late. Dibrugheta is at an altitude of 4000 mtrs. and is about 12 kms. from Lata Kharak and here amidst the cedars, firs and birches, is a pasture forming an oasis of brilliant green against the drab rocky slope, and the dark forest below. Longstaff has described this place as "the most beautiful place in the Himalayas" and few years later Tillman observed—"a horizontal oasis on a vertical desert."

From Dibrugheta, the party marched into Deodi and from there to Rhamni after crossing the Trisuli Nala. The species observed growing commonly on the way were Rhodendron Campanulatum, and Rheum sp., Swertia sp., Alium sp., and bergenia Strachyi. The camping site at Rhamni is on the right bank of the Rishi Ganga near a big rock with not much space of pitching tents. From Rhamini, the party started for Patalkhan on 25th September. The journey from Rhamni was quite thrilling and at times hazardous. A scattered birch forest, often mixed with Rhodendron campanulatum, is characteristic of the trade. The birch was found upto Bhujgar only, which literally means the name of birch. After crossing this strip, the next halting station was at Patalkhan (4000 mtrs.). From there one can see the massive Nanda Devi peak. The distance from Rhamni to Patalkhan is only 2 kms., but in terms of trekking it takes one complete day. From Patalkhan onwards starts the inner sanctuary. Then there was a succession of ledges and overhangs ending in straight climb.

#### **The inner sanctuary**

The inner sanctuary is highly picturesque. It can be divided topographically into three main regions, northern, south-eastern and western, with the Nanda Devi peak as the centre. To the north and south-east of the main peak flow two great glaciers which form the source of Rishi Ganga. The northern portion is full of glaciers and moraine beds originating in the inner snowy mountains ring wall and interspersed with meadows and glacial lakes. The south eastern portion also contains glacial beds. The western portion is formed mainly of a large sloping meadow—Sarsonpatal, about 3 kms. broad and 7 kms. long. This meadow is separated from the rocky pinnacles of the main peak of Nanda Devi by the western Rishi Ganga. The camping site at

Sarsonpatal (4500 mtrs.) was by the side of a glacial stream flowing from the unnamed peak of western hill of the sanctuary, at the edge of Rishi Ganga. This part is formed by morainic deposits intersected with glacial streams originating from Devisthan-I, Devisthan-II and an unnamed peak. The lower section of this deposit of rounded rocks and boulders can be seen from the Rishi river valley.

Inside the inner Nanda Devi sanctuary besides Bharals, Thar can also be seen and identified as the Himalayan Thar (*Hemitagus Jemlahicus*) and birds like Snow Pigeons (*Columba Leuconota*), Snow Cock (*Tetraogallus Himalayansi*) and few other birds. Inside the inner sanctuary, we found many groups of Bharals and Thars sitting on the sanctuary grasslands. Today unfortunately, poachers have moved into this sacred sanctuary against whom Tillman wrote, "Shooting for the pot may in some circumstances be necessary but in the sanctuary both sentiment and expediency are strongly opposed to it."

As the sun rises in the morning, the wind starts blowing from Rishi Ganga towards the western ring of the mountains, fruits and seeds of many alpine plants are carried away by the high wind. Plants like *Bergenia stracheyi*, *Tanacetum* sp. and *Potentilla* sp., roll in their leaves, exposing the minimum surface, to protect themselves from the night frost but the next morning sun makes them unroll their leaves again. This phenomenon is highly interesting and worthy of serious study.

Once inside the sanctuary, you enjoy the enchanting beauty of nature in its glorious form. The attractions of visiting the sanctuary are many.

## THE KING'S ELDER BROTHERS

One must visit Askote, it is splendidly beautiful.

I was in Askote. I had heard many stories about this small kingdom. It had still a king who lived there during summer. He passed his winters elsewhere. Also lived nearby in a place called Chiplakot the Rajis or Ban Rawats who claimed royal descent and described themselves as the elder brothers of the king of Askote. The representatives still attend the important functions at the capital town of Askote where they sit invariably next to Rajawar. They addressed the Rajawar of Askote and his queen as younger brother and younger sister in-law.

As per the legend passed down from generation to generation, their origin dates back to a prehistoric king who had two sons. The elder one was ardent lover of nature and fond of hunting, a hobby which kept him out of the capital, therefore, when the king died the younger son usurped the throne and never allowed the elder one to return home. This is the reason which keeps the Rajis out of cities and they think the city dwellers as cheats.

Atkinson considers Rajis as the descendants of Kirats. Dr. Campbell thought that Kirats were related to the Limbus who now reside in Eastern Nepal, and on the border of Nepal and Sikkim. It is difficult to enter into the secrets of their ancestry. Marriage

amongst them must take outside main 'Dhara' (family). Child marriage is unknown and disapproved. Hardly any ceremony takes place at the time of marriage. Their Gods and Goddesses are dimly known. Rajis are very particular about the purity of the water they drink. Today lot of changes have come in their customs and habits and today they are not so shy as they used to be. The enigma of royal descent keeps them full of pride.



## THE GREEN BELT TERAI-BHABAR

For centuries Terai remained in utter neglect because it was bone of contention between the Rohilla Moussalmans, Nawabs of Rohilkhand and kings of Kumaon. It quickly changed hands from time to time. Today Terai is known as the granary of Uttar Pradesh.

On leaving Bareilly, we reach Terai which means fresh greenery. As the name implies, the area is full of greenery and green fields, although once it was the heart of grassy swamp about ten miles broad which runs parallel to the foot of the Himalayas for several hundred miles. It owes its origin to the marshy nature of the ground, from which sluggish streams ooze and flow lazily or stand in stagnant pools. Tall reeds and grass used to cover the grounds and the entire area in pestilential region, and the Terai fever was one of the most fatal forms of malaria. During the hot and rainy season it used to be dangerous to pass the night but now the whole phenomenon has been changed.

### Bhabar

A few miles away towards the mountain slope on the approaches of Rishikesh, Kotedwar, Ramnagar, Kashipur and Haldwani is Bhabar which presents a massive wall of forest clad slopes and

heights rising steeply from the vast plains which lie mostly untraversed. This area has been described as tropical forest which has abundance of Sal tree. The ancient water courses have completely disappeared except for one of the greater rivers flowing down from the mountains pursues its wide sandy course. The numerous shapely cut ravines, however, show that in the rainy season there are many fierce torrents and these gullies reveal the fact that the ground consists of a vast collection of loose boulders with a thin deposit of earth on the top, sufficient to support the growth of the tropical forest and abundant foliage.

It is in fact a tract in which all the water sinks deep down, till finally arrested by the bed of the hardy day, and reappears further on, in the marshy Terai. The explanation of these peculiar features is that probably in former ages there was a great sea covering what is now the plain of upper India, and washing the foot of the Himalayas, and that its level has been ruined by volcanic agency and the action of rivers carrying vast quantities of soil from the mountains.

### **Big game**

This area once offered opportunities of big game but now with the denudation of forest wealth and frequent poaching the forest animals are fast disappearing. This landlocked area has also the distinction of being one of the best regions in the world for big game. Tigers and leopards are plentiful, and wild elephants are also found. Pythons of great size are sometimes met with, wrapped round forest trees, or lying gorged with a repast of a deer swallowed whole, Corbett travelled extensively through these thick jungles. Even today *shikaris* travel on the elephant back because on foot one can be lost owing to the high growth of vegetation around him.

### **Seat of ancient culture**

Terai-Bhabar are not without historical interest, because in the midst of forest recesses lie the ruins of ancient towns, villages and of temples, Buddhist and Brahmanical-vestiges of the ancient kingdom of Govisana, Brahmapur and Sirihpur which were once visited by Huen Tsang in the seventh century A.D.

There are no pools or streams, except where one of the greater

rivers flowing down from the mountains pursues its wide and sandy course. The numerous shapely cut ravines, however, show that in the rainy season there are many fierce torrents, and these gullies reveal the fact that the ground consists of a vast collection of loose boulders, with a thin deposit of earth on the top, sufficient, however, to support a great growth of forest trees. Bhabar is still, mostly a dry belt of land which swallows up all the minor streams coming down from the mountains and give back none of its waters until the Terai is reached. Human art and industry, however, have been at work to remedy this condition, and we find, from earlier reports and descriptions of the country, that it was the custom of the people to harvest several of the mountain streams and distribute them canalwise over the Bhabar. This was done on a much larger scale by the government in the days of Sir Henry Ramsay, when the surplus waters of the Bhimtal, and other lakes were conducted by dams and sluices to the level below and so the Bhabar has been to a great extent cleared and cultivated. A large number of Kumaonese, Punjabi refugees and ex-army personnel have settled in Bhabar and Terai and still many of the Kumaonese spend the old tradition of spending the winter season in Bhabar with their livestock, and there they till their well demarcated fields and fodder their cattle on the abundant herbage, at a time when all is dry and perched in the hilly tracts.

Today Terai holds the hopes of future agricultural revolution.



## NAGNATH POKHRI—THE VILLAGE OF THE SERPENT

The then State Minister for Finance Mr. Narendra Singh Bhandari, hailed from Nagnath Pokhri. He was so much concerned about his area and constituency. He worked hard for its development and all the time was worried over its development. He always took his officers to this area and during one of his such jaunts, I joined him and went to Pokhri alongwith the then Divisional Forest Officers, viz, Narendra Singh, Nirmal Joshi and Darshan Singh. The trip was memorable.

The road for Pokhri bifurcates from Rudraprayag and climbs east of Rudraprayag. As the road climbs up, from the elevated position, you can see the cultivated land which is in the shape of terraced fields. The village buildings are invariably set at upper end of the cultivated land. The whole country, as you look down on it, is rugged and rough, and is cut up by innumerable deep ravines and rock cliffs.

From Nagnath Pokhri one can see the vast magnitude of Himalayan ranges which are full of rhodendron flowers. The entire scene is immensely beautiful and it was made more memorable by Sri Bhandariji in his home village. The memory of this visit never fades.



## THE MEN WHO MATTER

A country is known by the men who flash in the horizon and brighten the times they live and in the subsequent years the life and times of their emergence are reckoned as the age of the historic figure in question. The great names of history stand for an age and live forever, like Gautam, Ashoka, Akbar and Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian scene and Christ, Cromwell, Peter the Great, Napoleon, Abraham Lincoln, Lenin and Churchill in Europe. Likewise in the history of Uttarakhand, the names of Sankracharya, Maularam, Gumani, Sir Henry Ramsay, Govind Ballabh Pant, Chandra Singh Garhwali, Barrister Mukundi Lal, Badri Dutt Pandey, Sombari Baba, 1008-Tapovan Maharaj, Krishashram Maharaj, Heriya Khand Maharaj and Neem Karori, Sumitranandan Pant, Mohan Lal Shah stand out heads and shoulders above others. They rose in eminence due to their indefatigable efforts to uplift the lot of their brethren and fellow people and untiring devotion to their cause which has left permanent imprint on the sands of time and pages of history.

We must, when we think of Himalayas, pay tribute to them and remember them because whatever is there in the Uttarakhand is because of their untiring zeal and intense devotion to the cause which was in ferment at the time they lived and pro-

pagated their ideals. They created such an intellectual ferment by their words, actions and examples that even today, decades later, people talk of them with respectful silence and gratitude. As such it is imperative that we must know about their life and times and the contribution they have made to make Uttarakhand whatever worth it is today.

### Sankracharya

First and above all, I would like to take into account the contribution made by Swami Sri Sankracharya.

The remarkable man may be reckoned among the “worthies” of the province, owing to the important part played by him in its religious history, and his death within the sacred boundary of Kedar. Sankaracharya must be regarded as one of the greatest spirits and most influential personalities of the world. There is, in fact, no one, with the single exception of Lord Buddha, in the range of Indian history who approaches to him in greatness of mind and wide appeal. There have been monarchs, like Ashoka or Akbar whose names are better known, but Sankaracharya by sheer force of intellect rose from a humble position to sway kings and empires and inaugurate vast religious changes throughout the length and breadth of India. The times were then favourable for him because Buddhism had become corrupt and it no longer held the minds of men in thrill. The force of Brahmanism, which was lying inactive was aroused by this young Andhrite, who died at the age of thirty two, leaving behind him an array of literary works that might well have occupied centuries. Today we feel bewildered over his boundless zeal in preaching the dogmas of Brahmanism, reforming its sects, settling its disputes, defining its bounds, and organising its priestly constitution, in addition to founding a sect of his own the tenents of which strongly resemble the philosophic theism of our own day, represents an amazing output of energy. The attraction that drew him from far off Malabar to these northern mountains must have been their well established sacredness as the home of the gods, especially of Siva, for whose worship he seems to have had a decided preference.

The religious unity of India owes its origin from Sankracharya who established four maths in the four corners of India. Each

one is visited in turn by people from different parts of India, thus signifying unity in diversity. When we visit Himalayas we must see the Jyotirmath where light of knowledge broke upon Sankracharya.

### **The legendary uncrowned king of Uttarakhand Sir Henry Ramsay**

Whenever there is talk of Uttarakhand, the name of Sir Henry Ramsay flashes instantaneously for his statesmanship and magnanimity. He did yeoman service for Kumaon in his 28 years of service. He is well remembered for his benevolent despotism. His authority was unquestioned and limitless, but from all accounts he used that authority for whatever good he was capable of doing for the people.

A story is told about his being the law of the land. During the hearing of a case, a large number of rulings were quoted on behalf of the landlord. Ramsay sat through the proceedings patiently and at the end told the advocates pleading the case of rich landlord that he was law in the Kumaon, and in open court tore all rulings and decided the case in favour of the tenant.

The Ramsay Hospital, Nainital, Ramsay Convent, and Ramsay Inter College, Almora bear testimony to his greatness, his farsightedness and his immense dedication for the land and people of Kumaon.

### **Kumaon Kesari**

Think of Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant and the very picture of Himalayas is before you. He was born in Almora district on 10th September, 1887 in a remote village known as Khunt. He had his early education in Almora and later on graduated in Law from Allahabad University in 1909 in first division. He joined Nainital Bar and soon became much sought after lawyer.

### ***Freedom fighter***

Charged with fierce fervor of nationalism he began to take active part in contemporary politics and soon came to be recognised as undisputed leader of hill people. He won recognition in 1923 when he was elected for the legislative council of

United Provinces. In 1927 he was elected President of the U.P. Congress Committee. In 1928 he received serious head injuries while demonstrating against Simon Commission, but luckily his intellectual brilliance stood unruffled, in 1931 he was elected member of Congress Executive Committee and few years later in 1937 when Congress came to power he became its first Premier in Uttar Pradesh. It was at this stage when he showed signs of keen political insight and superb administrative qualities which enabled him not only to keep the party machinery united together and moving but succeeded in bringing home numerous progressive reforms for his people.

The year 1942 saw him in dynamic action.

#### *Administrator*

In 1947 he became first Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh in free India and continued to be so till 1956 when he was called to join the central cabinet. It was here that every facet of the life of state bore the imprint of his personality and made rapid strides towards self sufficiency through his agrarian and economic reforms. He abolished zamindari and laid emphasis on small scale industries but the most characteristic point of his administration was the maintenance of law and order at a time when rest of India was being rocked by communal disturbances. This attracted the attention of Mr. Nehru who ultimately called him to join central cabinet as Home Minister, in which capacity he remained till his death on 7th March 1961. All through his years of sweat and toil he carved out a distinguished place for himself because of his unrivalled knowledge of men and affairs, figures and facts, unfailing skill in handling complicated issues and disposing even his rivals with a sense of satisfaction.

#### *Parliamentarian*

Above all he was a great parliamentarian. Whenever government found itself in deep water due to stiff opposition on matters of national and international importance, inside and outside parliament, it was his privilege to tear into shreds the opposition with the deftness of a lawyer. He never missed a point and showed uncanny coolness in the midst of turmoil, wisdom when confusion was widespread, decision when indecision was

order of the day. Due to these unfailing virtues, when he was pitched against reputed debators he always came out triumphant since he combined in his own words "wisdom with knowledge, philosophy with science, prosperity with grace and joy with beauty."

### **The saints and sermons of Uttarakhand**

May it be in the political development of a kingdom or an individual personality, the influence of contemporary saints is of far reaching consequences. In the history of Uttarakhand, since time immemorial sages have appeared and left their mark, Jagadguru Sankracharya being the foremost. In the recent times saints like Sombari Maharaj, Swami Shivanand and Swami Neem Karori Maharaj have held considerable sway over the minds of the people and still their memory lingers on in their mind and people talk in hushed voices the tales of their miracles keeping their massive impact on the minds of people. I would like to advise readers when they sojourn a visit to Himalayas, they must also visit the places associated with the miracles of these saints, because these saints illustrated in practical life what the Indian philosophy preached through scriptures.

### **Neem Karori Maharaj**

Amongst the most wellknown saints of the Uttarakhand, Neem Karori Maharaj has left innumerable tales of his miracles for the benefit of his bewildered followers and admirers alike. Nobody knows fully well from where he came except for few facts about his miracles at various places, like the one at Neem Karori railway station at Farukhabad. It is related that suddenly he had a fancy for travelling by train; he got into a coach and sat in the compartment. Sometime later, a ticket collector came and asked for ticket from the Babaji. Babaji kept quiet. The annoyed ticket examiner halted the train at next railway station and ordered Babaji to get down; Babaji obediently got down and sat below a tree. He seemed absolutely unconcerned of whatever had happened. The ticket examiner and the guard blew the whistle and showed the flag, the engine was started but it could not budge an inch. The engine driver tried again and again with no consequence and ultimately good sense pre-

vailed over some one who suggested that only Babaji could make the train move. The station master, the ticket examiner and the guard begged Babaji to entrain and occupy his seat. Ultimately babaji entered the compartment and settled on his seat. The train gave a jerk, whistled and steamed off. The station subsequently came to be known as Neem Karori station.

### **Encounter with the age builders**

There are numerous other tales about Neem Karori Baba, Heriya Khand Baba and Sombari Baba. Uttarakhand holds secrets to the mystic past. I had numerous occasions of meeting many good saints eversince my childhood but the most memorable were the brief but brilliant encounters with Baba Krishninand Ji, Bharti Ji, Ramaswamy Abhdoot Chinmayanand Ji, Akhandanand Ji, Swami Pundriksh, Ma Anandmayee and many others who cast a spell of superhuman aura whenever they met.

Not only this, I had an opportunity of meeting men of the mountains and men who love the mountains. I still remember the chance meeting with Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant, and Pt. Jawaharlal Ji and Sumitranandan Pant when I was a child. I met years later men of such eminence and dedication such as Dr. Ram Rahul, Narayan Dutt Tewari, Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna, H.C. Sarin, M.S. Kohli, Maj. Cheema, Gurdyal Singh, Brig. Gyan Singh, Mrs. Bosie Sen, Chandulal Shah Thulgharia and Sunderlal Bahuguna. I had many close encounters with them and still continue to be in touch because our goals are common.

The purpose of writing this book has also been primarily to attract the mountaineers, tourists and trekkers to come and visit the Holy Himalayas—the abode of Gods.

## COME TO UTTAR PRADESH—HIMALAYAS

When it is summer, we think of Himalayas and nothing else than Himalayas because at this time of the year, the plains of India burn and the great cities become burning ovens. At such a time, people want a respite, breath fresh air, see the unseen and climb the unclimbable. The scenic beauty of the Himalayas is immensely captivating when viewed from different places, times and seasons of the year. The viewer never loses sight of the ever changing phenomenon, thickly wooded mountains, dark blue ranges, one piled after another and in the background the landscape of snowy peaks, each rising higher than the other, behind the morning mist when gradually evening falls and fades into darkness after having shed golden light. Down below the hills, we have the grand panorama of green fields and woods encircled by silvery streams, and at night the fierce flare of the jungle fire illuminating the surrounding areas. Grander still is the moonlit night which makes the leaves of forest trees quiver with delight and when the peaks sparkle with silvery shine under the bluish background of the ajure sky. The rivers reflect on the dancing waves the silvery moonlit night. The burst of the monsoon creates mixed reaction in the minds of the locals and visitors and when the water laden clouds burst over mountain

barriers and quench the thirst of the valley setting every stream and rivulet into spate which in turn floods the rivers and gorges. Still more captivating is the sight of rolling mists of fog enveloping valleys in a pall of vapour. The attraction of the Valley of Flowers and Dioorital lake which adorn the Himalayas is everlasting.

Uttarakhand beckons all who wish to move out and be finally free to come during summer in its lap when the temples open in the month of May and remind you of the existence of the great shrines of Badri and Kedarnath which are opened for *yatra* in summer, year after year for the *darshan* of Vishnu and Shiva, which hold foremost place in the mind of every Hindu and in fact to many the fruition of the desires is the crowning glory of a visit to the holy Badri, Kedar, Gaumukh, Gangotri and Yamunotri *tirthas* which lie embedded in the midst of U.P. Himalayas. In fact what Mecca is to a Muslim and Palestine is to a Christian, the Himalayas with their holy *dhams* are to the Hindus.

Uttarakhand also provides excellent experiences in wild life at the famed National Jim Corbett Park near Ramnagar and Dudhwa Park near Kheri.

### **How to go**

If you are planning visit to Uttarakhand or any of its bounteous and bounteous hill stations or a religious place, always consult those who have been there or the professionals who take care of you. It is better to consult the nearest tourist agency, Kumaon Vikas Mandal or Garhwal Vikas Mandal, Tourist Bureau of the U.P. Govt., Tourism department or the Director of Tourism U.P. They will furnish the required details and also reserve accommodation which is one of the most important things for visiting any hill station or place of tourist interest or hill resort. In fact whenever you decide on a trip to a hill station following should be remembered :

#### *Make a decision*

You have always to make decision, therefore, decision has to be taken that you intend visiting certain tourist resorts on a fixed date and don't change the date and leave on the fixed day.

*Leave nothing to chance*

Ensure advance booking of accommodation so that at last moment confusion is avoided.

*Do not carry heavy loads*

These days, the hotels and tourist lodges provide ample facilities, therefore boarding and lodging is no problem.

*When to go*

This summer and for the summers to come, I would like to advise you on the visit to one of the following places in Uttar Pradesh.

**Nainital**

Nainital lies at a height of 1933 metres and at a distance of 34 kms from Kathgodam, the last terminal railway station on the metre gauge line which links Lucknow with Nainital. Nainital is also connected by the weekly air service of Indian Airlines from Delhi to Pantnagar from where Nainital is 70.8 kms.

Nainital offers most beautiful lake surroundings which provide besides yachting and boating an ideal swimmer's paradise. Pony provides taste of riding. There is lot of trekking and a wide expanse of rock climbing and mountaineering too.

Nainital has a satellite of scenic spots like Bhawali, Mukteshwar, Naukuttchia and Sat-tal.

Stay facilities are available in abundance at Nainital.

**Ranikhet**

Ranikhet or the 'field of the queen' is an idyllic and unspoilt retreat which attracts those seeking a quiet summer holiday situated at a height of 1829 metres. It presents a panorama of infinite variety of Himalayan ranges, particularly providing an excellent view of Nanda Devi and Trishul ranges.

Ranikhet has ideal surroundings for golf at Kalika and fishing facilities at Bhaluadam situated at a distance of 13 kms.

Ranikhet is situated at a distance of 84 kms from Kathgodam and 60 kms from Nainital.

## **Mussoorie**

The pride of the U.P. hills, is very wellknown as the queen of hill-stations. It is easily approachable from Dehradun, the last broad gauge railway station which connects Calcutta-Bombay through direct trains.

Mussoorie offers varied attractions including a dip in the Kempty falls.

## **Yamunotri-Gangotri-Kedarnath and Badrinath**

When the summer approaches, the devout Hindu plans to visit the sacred most *tirthas* or holy dhams which are situated on the peaks of Himalayas. The inquisitive *yatri* must always consult the Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam and Kumaon Vikas Nigam which undertake guided tours to these places; even if you don't participate in one of these guided tours, you can always take advantage of the experience. I have named only few. There are so many beautiful places in this kingdom of gods that is Himalayas.

## **Always remember**

When you reach strange places always remember :

1. Carry a small first aid box with few essential medicines.
2. Don't go to strange places and do not stay in dark dingy area.
3. Do not take your foodstuff from unknown places.

Truely, when you came to Uttar Pradesh Himalayas, you stand on the very parapet of Heaven.

## UTTARAKHAND : A CHALLENGE TO PLANNERS

Eversince the dawn of civilisation, the Himalayas have attracted attention of the people who are always in search of new vistas of vision and endeavour. This craving to see for one's own self and unravel the mysteries of the Himalayas has always set many a people to undertake an adventurous journey into the hazardous path of high Himalayas. This search has been more intense in the middle Himalayas which are known as Uttarakhand which consist of the administrative divisions of Garhwal and Kumaon. Uttarakhand presents a panorama of infinite diversity, richly wooded terai forests, arid zones, high altitude tracts, hill stations, isolated hamlets, winding roads, searing rivers, green valleys, succulent pastures, forests, places of pilgrimage and perpetual snow. The scenic beauty of the land is so captivating when viewed from different places, times and seasons of the year. The viewer never loses sight of the ever changing phenomenon. This land of fact and fables is peopled by sturdy and short heighted faces who have won many laurels for the motherland as daughty fighters.

### **Subject of neglect**

Such fairlyland of fact and fables remained under constant

political and historical neglect because of the feeling that Himalayas were invincible; therefore, there was no need to strain one's head because it was too big to be probed. Wherever there was any talk of taking up development work in the Himalayas, we shouted at the top of our voice that we will make it Switzerland of India. It is there where it was and even now it remains outside the mainstream of national life. In fact Himalayas have interested only pilgrims, trekkers, mountaineers and tourists. For sometime, this dull lull over Himalayas was broken in 1950 when Chinese annexed Tibet but after some hue and cry the country fell into deep slumber and we woke up only after a decade when Chinese showed evil designs over Barhoti and other parts of Himalayan territories. Quickly, three hill districts of Pithoragarh, Chamoli and Tehri Garhwal were created. It began to be felt that Himalayas "had thrown up not only the challenge of the underprivileged, poor and downtrodden people but also the challenge of unassimilated citizens who have to be integrated into our national life, on their own terms".<sup>1</sup> Truly, while fortifying the citadels of India's defence, there cannot be a greater asset for us than contentment and enlightenment among the citizens inhabiting the borderland where "the prime requisite" in the words of Sri V. V. Giri "is the establishment of a sound, stable and broadbased economy and adequate training to the population to make full use of the resources of modern science and technology. In undertaking this delicate task under the hazardous and inhospitable conditions of the unapproachable terrain of the Himalayas, those in charge of social welfare work in the border area will have to make a determined effort and utilise all the resourcefulness at their command...Any change that we contemplate should come about through the volition of the beneficiaries as a result of their experience and self realisation."<sup>2</sup>

In order to bring about wholesale change, study the basic problems which are being confronted by the people living in the high Himalayas in general and Uttarakhand in particular.

1. Sri B. N. Ganguly

2. Sri V. V. Giri.

### **Spotlight on basic problems**

Himalayas have occupied a place of admiration for hundreds and thousands of people and to the sages it has been a place of meditation, for teeming millions a place of worship where Gods dwell, to the mountaineers a challenge but to the social workers it is all things combined because while the mountains have been worshipped, the people living there have been subjected to colossal neglect for centuries. This isolation, while protecting these areas from foreign inroads and influences, tended to circumscribe the social, economic, political and cultural outlook of the inhabitants of these long neglected regions and foster in them a sense of separateness and alienation from the rest of the country except in the areas close to the railhead, hill stations, centres of pilgrimage or conventional trading centres. Therefore, the service of the people living in the interiors of Himalayas is a great challenge and needs people with intense devotion, dedication and efficiency who are prepared to brave the hazards of nature and discomforts of detached living.

In fact, social welfare projects in the Himalayas embrace a wide range of activities, comprising community development and mobilisation of village volunteer force which can boost the morale of the people and motivate them for adult literacy, social and health education, provision of pure drinking water, environmental hygiene, cleanliness and productive employment opportunities with a network of industries, mixed farming, horticulture, road construction, development of useful as well as aesthetically exquisite handicraft and above all reorientation in their standard of living. As such, the work for the welfare of the Himalayan community development is many sided and of complex nature. It is going to be long and laborious but determined efforts on this score will certainly bear desired fruits. For this, one has to cultivate not only a clear mind but also certain amount of toughness, dedicatedness and courage of conviction. The soul and the nerve should work abreast.

Because of spiritual and religious association, the high Himalayas have always been a distant, tough and majestic mountains full of mystery and breathtaking beauty, abode of Gods and source of life giving rivers. The fact that the people of Himalayas were also part of Indian mainstream was dimly known and beyond

their introduction as *pahari* they have always been subject of sheer neglect, the net result of which has been that today we face following complex and varied problems about the land and people of Uttarakhand.

#### *Political neglect*

Today, the Himalayas, particularly central Himalayas have thrown up not only the challenge of underprivileged poor and down-trodden people but also the challenge of unassimilated citizens who have to be integrated into the mainstream of our national life. For doing so, it is necessary that the study of the history, culture and civilisation is encouraged. Their role in shaping the national scene is interpreted and explained not only to them but to the students of history. It should be so highlighted that they could take a sense of pride in their past and prepare themselves for playing such role in the future.

#### *Economic degradation*

What we see on the roadside is not Himalayan economy. It merely reflects recent gains out of our new found love for the Himalayas after 1962 or earnings from the traditional *yatra* trade. Just below or above the roadside in the villages people are living a life which is devoid of sanitation, hygiene and all modern amenities. Therefore, the prime requisite is the establishment of a sound, solid and broadbased economy. For establishing such economy, the locals will have to be given adequate training to make full use of the resources of modern science and technology. In undertaking this delicate task under the hazardous and inhospitable conditions of the unapproachable terrain of the Himalayas, those in charge of social welfare work in the border areas will have to make a determined effort and utilise all the resourcefulness at their command. It must be borne in mind that all change must come through the volition of beneficiaries, continued experience and local conditioning. It has not to emanate from the white collared bureaucrats sitting in the air conditioned rooms or through political gimmickery of the vested interests.

#### *Illiteracy*

The causes of low literacy in the region are far to seek, parti-

cularly, among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. There is neither tradition nor much enthusiasm for education. One reason for this lack of enthusiasm is that literacy has not been functionally associated with the occupation; that is why even now inspite of much emphasis on education, the villagers still keep themselves away from education as a result of which the average attendance in the schools and colleges is very low. Another aspect of literacy is complete ignorance about the history, culture, geography and other aspects of their homeland because nothing has been done to incorporate their history, culture and geography in the text books. This has been a Himalayan blunder. The need of the hour is that following subjects are included in the curriculum of the schools and colleges of Uttarakhand because Universities of Kumaon and Garhwal have already partially included these subjects in their syllabus. In order to streamline educational system, it is imperative that following subjects are included in a systematic manner in the curriculum from the primary standard to university level, so that students can know better the land to which they belong :

- (i) Himalayan agriculture combined with horticulture and vegetable growing.
- (ii) Investigation and cultivation of medicinal plants in the light of the Indian systems of medicine.
- (iii) Animal husbandry combined with poultry farming.
- (iv) Engineering in the context of irrigation and electric generation.
- (v) Himalayan geology with particular emphasis on mineralogy and metallurgy.
- (vi) Problems of hygiene, sanitation and public health.
- (vii) Study of Himalayan architecture, sculpture and other fine arts.
- (viii) Study of Himalayan phonetics.
- (ix) Study of local geography, anthropology, botany, geology, chemistry etc. with particular reference to Himalayan conditions.
- (x) Investigation and open up the study of the mysteries of Himalayan history and culture.
- (xi) Study of local folk art and dance-drama.
- (xii) Forestry be included in the curriculum of schools and colleges so that students get involved in the maintenance of

national wealth.

- (xiii) Study of water resources and its use.
- (xiv) Horticulture and agriculture in Himalayan context needs to be studied.

- (xv) Prospects of tourism.

At present, there is complete dearth of books on above subjects; therefore, it is urgently required that a body of experts on Himalayas should write text books on various subjects involving above and other Himalayan problems. Having imparted correct education to the children, we can make a stable launching pad for our broadbased future development plans.

#### *Lack of local involvement*

There is complete lack of local involvement in the developmental schemes due to faulty organisational education and local apathy which is directly connected with the faulty educational system and illiteracy. We have to evolve such educational systems which will remove the student alienation and at university level of education Universities of Garhwal and Kumaon will have to put the students into inter-disciplinary groups. In fact N.C.E.R.T. and I.C.A.R. will have to formulate such schemes which will remove student alienation and drudgery from the land and involve them in their community integration plans so that ecological regeneration is achieved.

#### *Low agricultural output*

Since vast stretches of land are being cultivated on ancient pattern of agriculture, and due to fragile nature of terraces, cultivation is scarce as a result of which the people are forced to live in small and scattered villages where they carry on cultivation and other economic activities at a considerable low level of technology. Frequent shifting cultivation is supplemented by semi-shifting dry cultivation and some household industry for supporting daily expenditure, both combined provides them precarious means of livelihood. Moreover, the number of personnel employed for cultivation is very high which includes the women. It fact, women participation in Uttarakhand is probably highest in India.

The productivity of the soil varies from place to place and

double cropping is hardly known. Agriculture is not confined to the above, even the mountain slopes and the ridges have been cut out into terraced fields but even then, the return does not fully justify the labour. Every year, when the rain comes, it washes away the top soil and all manurial dressing which implies shifting farming as a result of which each year new ground has to be broken at several places like the jhoom system of Nagaland, causing instability and erosion of forest land. Moreover, increase of population has also intensified pressure on the land.

In order to make hills self-sufficient in respect of food, it is of utmost importance that people are educated about the importance of modern agriculture and asked to plant fruit trees, cash crops, flower seeds, medicinal plants, dry fruits, potatoes, ginger, pulses and beans. In fact cereals and cash crops should be accommodated adequately.

In the field of agriculture some real constructive work has been done by Vivekananda Institute founded by Mr. Boshi Sen at Hawalbagh and agricultural Research Institute of the Ministry of Defence, Almora and of course G.B. Pant Agricultural University, Pantnager. The research attainments of these institutions need to be disseminated to the villages through display, distribution and consultancy units and development blocks.

### *Irrigation*

Closely connected with the agriculture is irrigation. It has not been brought under systematic planning and execution. One can always find almost all the canals out of commission due to nature's curse, rampant corruption, landslides and neglect of the engineers and the non-participation by the villagers. The best way can be to dig irrigation canals all along the hill sides and connecting them with one another. The maintenance of these canals should be shared by the irrigation authorities and villagers.

Some of the these minor irrigation canals can be utilised for generating micro-hydel power also which will feed a nucleus of villages and provide power for the cottage industries attached to them.

*Forests and hill economy*

Forests occupy an important place in the life of the hill people and that is why they frequently feature in the folklore also. Living in the constant company of pine, deodar, rhodendron, oak and birches at home and out in the forests, the villagers have become accustomed to unrestricted use of the forest wealth. Till the middle of the nineteenth century, this traditional right remained unviolated but then about this time, appeared Fredirick Wilson who offered some royalty to the Maharaja and settled at Harsil in Uttarkashi district. As far back as 1860 he started exploitation of rich deodar forests and developed techniques of transporting it through river Bhagirathi. Increasing income from the forests whetted the appetite of the royal government and moved it to enact laws for the increased exploitation of forests through contractors and forest department. These laws were naturally resented by the locals and most of the agitations in Garhwal centred round forest and land. It needs to be stressed and well understood by all that the local people have to do something with the forests. As such, there is need for reappraisal of our forest policy, particularly in view of popular public resentment and increasing denudation of forests due to excess in cutting and pilferage.

In this search for fresh look at the forests and in order to make them basis for a viable economy, it is necessary to protect forests from the contractors' exploitation. A sense of responsibility has to be inculcated in the minds of the people for the protection of forests. The menace of deforestation has to be combated seriously and effectively by educating the people besides meeting severe punishment to the defaulters. Side by side afforestation schemes have also to be taken in hand so that phased plantation alongwith systematic cutting plan is properly executed.

*Animal husbandry*

For supplementing food resources, providing raw material to woollen industry and increasing cash income raising of livestock comes next only to agriculture. Whereas the vast pastures support large flocks in summer, the withering autumn and the snow blanketed winter deal, as it were, the death blow to most

of the cattle due to lack of fodder, resources. The flocks must be migrated to lower altitudes. The demands of the plough and restriction in the way of forest conservancy, soil erosion etc. curtail the fodder resources, particularly during the winter. In order to find solution to these problems something has been done through IGADA in Almora district and HADA in Pauri district. But this has solved only fraction of the problem. Still much needs to be done.

The existing cattle wealth is almost useless for reasons of quality. The returns out of it are very low. Unfortunately, most of government cattle and sheep farms have been a failure due to incompetent functioning of the authorities and widespread corruption. In fact, what we require is traditional Gujar type economy which provides professional dedicated norms with a spirit of adventure. The conventional type of cattle rearing is totally useless because most of the existing livestock is worthless. The place of existing system must be taken by more industrious and dairy oriented livestock and people.

#### *Transportation*

Notwithstanding all the progress that has been made in road building, particularly after 1962, transportation of raw material still remains a problem due to distance, height, rains and faulty constructions. The last railhead is at Tanakpur, Kathgodam, Ramnagar, Moradabad, Hardwar, Kotdwara, Rishikesh and Dehradun, which can be called gateways for high Himalayas. No tourist centre of this area is connected to the plains by railways as against Simla and Darjeeling. In fact, the old project of a railway line up to Karanprayag and Bageshwar needs to be revived so that we can economise on the telling resources of petrol. This mini rail system can be run through hydroelectric systems.

Rivers are too fast-flowing to be navigable and they flow mostly over rocky terrain. However, wooden logs are transported through some of the rivers, particularly during winter and summer season when the flow of water is smooth.

These fast flowing rivers can certainly be utilised for generating power which can be utilised for running roadways and electric trains.

### *Social problems*

Many of the current problems owe their origin to the socio-political neglect of the area which in its wake has left following problems:

- (i) Social disabilities based on the caste structure which has resulted in the practice of untouchability and free sex particularly amongst the polyandrous groups.
- (ii) Extravagant expenditure on social ceremonies.
- (iii) Adverse influence of superstitions on the psychology of the people which tells on their health and productivity.
- (iv) Socially crippling diseases, deficient diet, want of hygiene and low housing space.
- (v) Illiteracy has caused excessive drinking and resultant poverty.

It is gratifying to note that with the increase in the means of communications and increasing education, the former tendency towards social stratifications even within sub-castes is now being replaced by attempts towards caste consolidation and inter-caste marriages are on the increase. However, this aspect is still isolated. Untouchability is fast disappearing in the cities but in the remote villages the barriers of caste are still held tight round the neck of the village social structure.

### *The place of women*

In the economy and social framework of the Himalayas, woman occupies an important place but unfortunately her condition is ridiculous because at her parents' house she suffers from illiteracy because they consider that if they send their girls to the school, they will lose the fetcher of water, wood and caretaker of small children, particularly when the mother is working in the field or forest or does some odd jobs. When she grows, her father very often faces the problems of dowry and meeting marriage expenses which seem ridiculous in an area of deficit economy as has been rightly pointed out by Chandravarkar, "People who need money badly to fight against illiteracy, disease, ill housing condition and destitution cannot afford to waste their meagre income in such a ruinous unproductive manner." In some parts of Uttarakhand after her marriage, she has to withstand the sexual lust of four to five husbands because of poly-

androus formation of society which adversely tells on her health. The serf of the day who carries heavy loads on her head or back has also to cook meals for the family and after a strenuous day she finds at night one of the young husbands making amorous advances. The result is total physical breakdown of the woman concerned, confusing growth of the children and increasing immorality which has created the horror of venereal diseases.

Now with the passage of time, introduction of primary education, continued social work and increasing awareness amongst the women and their guardians is taking place about the pitiable condition of womenfolk. Evils like child marriage, dowry, sale price, polyandry and excessive physical labour are fast disappearing.

#### *Lack of proper sanitation and death of medical coverage*

Inspite of their hard life, close proximity to nature and bracing climate, the average man in the hills is shorter in stature and poorer in physique. This is because of lack of personal and environmental hygiene, impure drinking water, unbalanced diet, living in dark dingy and smoke filled rooms. Most of the village streets are littered with night soil which causes not only widely prevalent diseases but also helps in the spread of these to other villages. The result is that today diseases like goitre, deaf-mutism, leprosy, venereal diseases, tuberculosis and intestinal diseases are widely prevalent. This is caused because of insanitary habits, impure drinking water, poor living condition and lack of space. In fact, this has accounted for the poor health of the hill people.

The Government has certainly opened widespread network of hospitals, primary health centres and Ayurvedic clinics but due to lack of knowledge about the local conditions and poor planning most of the hospitals are either without doctors or medicines. In fact, Government should open smaller hospitals which a compounder can manage. The supply of medicines needs to be increased and the officer-in-charge of these health centres should be prompted to induce people to improve local conditions of sanitation and hygiene, so that we are able to work by the old adage that prevention is better than cure.

### *Scarcity*

The whole environment of an unknown beautiful place centres round one important object—water. The main source of water in the Himalayas is precipitation, either in the form of rain or snow. While snow falls above 6000 ft. during winters, rainfall takes place at the foothills. Rainfall over the southern ranges facing planes is higher than the northern slopes. Many of its people suffer from scarcity of water which becomes acute during summer. Ladies can be seen carrying heavy water laden vessels over their heads. Water is also scarce for irrigational purposes. Therefore, it is necessary that water conservation schemes are developed which will generate power on the one hand, irrigate low lying areas on the other hand and provide drinking water side by side. If there is more water in a village, the people can lead a decent and clean life. They can also grow variety of cash crops and vegetables which will ultimately lead to the development of agro-industrial units.

### *Small scale industries*

At present the economy of the hills is based on the 'Money Orders' which every hillman serving in the plains sends home; as such the hill economy has come to be described as 'Money Order economy'. We have failed to give it some sound base on the basis of available raw materials. If countries like Japan, Czechoslovakia, Israel, Switzerland and Yugoslavia which are as big as Uttarakhand can capture world market by providing consumer goods why can't we do so. What is required is that we need to establish some raw material based plants which could be easily run by local hydro-electric power generation.

In order to examine above feasibility we must appoint an expert committee which should evolve schemes which will—

- (i) Boost hill economy
- (ii) Avail opportunities of local initiative.
- (iii) Capture and meet the demands of market.
- (iv) Consume locally produced electricity.
- (v) Provide stable base to the Himalayan economy.

### *Tourism*

Gifted with an extensively beautiful panorama, Uttarakhanda

## *Uttarakhand*

provides places of breathtaking scenic beauty where the tired and inquisitive tourist can go and relax. Except for the hill towns of Mussoorie and Nainital we have not been able to develop other places like Lohaghat, Pithoragrah, Kausani, Almora, Ranikhet, Pauri, Gopeshwar, Barakote and Chakrauta. Tourism can certainly be most sophisticated smokeless industry.

In the aforementioned paragraphs, I have listed only few of the basic problems. There are numerous others. The immediate and ultimate task for us is to formulate a plan of action.

### **Task before us**

The land where Gods and Goddesses are said to dwell is today anguished by the soberties of nature, indifference of the rulers and disloyalty of the sons of soil. A coordinated plan of action aimed at the overhauling of the entire administrative systems and reframjng of the rules and regulations governing the functioning of various government departments, development of forests, implementing soil conservation, development of horticulture, exploitation of fodder resources, prevention of soil erosion, systematic destruction and clearance of ever-growing vegetation and waste wood, provide better and improved varieties of sheeps, improve irrigational facilities, improve health, hygiene, sanitation, drinking water and medical aid with one another and above all mobilise agriculture and horticulture. The utilisation of wastes and manure, processing of raw material and educating people about the necessity of mental and physical health is required.

In order to achieve above ends today Himalayas call for workers, dedicated workers, workers with talent, energy, zeal and ambitions who will identify themselves completely with the local people and their problems and are not lured merely by the glory of the snow capped peak or magic spell of the holy *dhams* but are able to respond to the call of starving humanity and are willing to endow them with hope for future. Our objective should be—

- (i) to create conditions of security and stability by providing increased employment opportunities through complex of small scale industries based on local raw material.
- (ii) to make raw material available to the entrepreneurs

more particularly wool and turpentine which form an item of basic necessity.

(iii) to strengthen and develop local economy by establishing consumer goods industries wherever possible.

(iv) to encourage local initiative, local leadership and a sense of community consciousness among the people by promoting cooperative efforts.

(v) In order to build up local initiative and skilled labour the system of education needs to be overhauled with particular emphasis on vocational education, connected with local conditions incorporating through training of local cadres in management and technical skill.

(vi) to keep increasing productivity and eliminate drudgery by introducing new and improved tools.

(vii) to open up an institute of Himalayan studies which will prepare a programme of social reconstruction after taking into consideration prevailing socio-economic conditions of an area and assess the future potential for development. Apart from the resources that can be taken up for study at this institute, it will also work as a cleaning house of thought and information on Uttarakhand. It will also organise camps and courses for training dedicated cadres who intend to do their bit for the Himalayans.

(viii) Reorientation of government machinery is necessary in order to bring developmental schemes into fruition. The administrative structure should be such so as to dispense with bureaucratic dilatoriness and multiplicity.

(ix) An inventory of natural resources be made through ICAR so that it could be known what is available where.

(x) People's participation in programme (PPP) has to be introduced so that the beneficiaries could feel a sense of association.

(xi) Hydro-electric power generation needs to be linked up with the irrigation and supply of drinking water.

(xii) The local bodies need to be strengthened and their area of jurisdiction defined.

(xiii) A new outlook needs to be taken for the functioning of forest and PWD department.

We have had enough of seminars, committees and conferences;

*Uttarakhand*

therefore, the need of the hour is that we sit together to mend the shattered dreams of Himalayan people through dedicated work and devotion.

**APPENDIX 1**  
**SOME MAJOR PEAKS AND THEIR INDIAN CLIMBERS**

Name of the Peak	Height (ft.)	Location	Name of the Leader	Climbers	Year
1	2	3	4	5	6
Mt. Everest	29,028	Nepal	Sir John Hunt Lt. Comdr. M.S. Kohli	Tenzing Hillary, Nawang Gomboe, Capt. A.S. Cheema, Sonam Gyatse, Sonam Wangyal, C.P. Vohra, Ang Kami, Capt. H.S. Ahluwalia, H.C.S. Rawat Phu Dorjee	1953 1965
Dhaulagiri	26,807	Nepal-Tibet border	KF Bunshah Pasang Dawa	Sonam Gyatse and others	
Cho Oyu	26,867	Nepal-Tibet border			
Manashi	26,688	Nepal			
Nanga Parvat	26,658	Kashmir			
Annapurna I	26,504	Western Nepal			
II	25,041				
Nanda Devi	25,645	Kumaon	Maj. N. Kumar	Nawang Gombu, Dawa Norbu	1964

Kamet	25,447	Kumaon	Shipton N. Juyal	Sherpa Pamba, Sunder Porkhy, Pooran Singh	1953
Mana Peak	23,868	Kumaon-Garhwal	Biswadesh Biswas	Parvin Chakravarty, Sherpa Ldupa Tshering, Pasang Tshering, Pasang Phutur	1966
Mukut Parvat	23,361	Kumaon	Maj. N. Kumar	Sub. HPP Mehta, Sherpa Anghima,	1958
Trisul	23,360	Kumaon	Rahul Thakur	Miss Nandini Patel and others—ITBP	1958
Satopanth	23,313	Garhwal	Maj. P.P. Cheema	Cadet R.S. Cheema, Sherpa Angkami	
Chaukhamba	23,420	Garhwal			
		Himalaya			
Nandakot	22,510	Kumaon	M.S. Kohli	K. P. Sharma, Amulya Sen, Ramnathan,	
Kedarnath Dome	22,410	Garhwal	Amulya Sen	two Sherpas	
Neelkanth	21,640	Garhwal	Capt. N. Kumar	O.P. Sharma, Sherpa Parba Lopsang, ITBP Team	1974
Bandarpoonch	20,720	Garhwal	Capt. Jagjit Singh	Capt. KN Thedani, Capt. M.S. Joshi and others.	1959
Tharkot	20,016	Kumaon	K.P. Sharma	S. Thapa, B.B. Ambartha, Sherpa Dokpa	

(Contd.)

## (Appendix I Contd.)

<i>I</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
Hathi Parvat	22,070	Garhwal	Sonam Gyatse	Hav. C.S. Rawat, Thandup 1963	
Panchachuli III .	20,710	Kumaon	Flt/H A.K.	Tshering and others	
IV	20,780		Chaudhry	Amulya Sen,	1964
				Capt. A.S. Cheema	
Bhagirathi II	V 21,120 21,365	Garhwal	Maj. Surat Singh	Giri Raj Shah, Const. Bagmal, Hav. N.S. Rawat and others	1968
Gori Che	22,700	Assam	T. Haralu	Maj. J.C. Joshi, Capt. N. Thapa and others.	1966

## APPENDIX 2

## CHRONOLOGY OF UTTARAKHAND KINGS

## CHRONOLOGY OF KATYURI KINGS

Katyuri Kings	Period A.D.	Contemporary Kings		
		Tibet	Bengal	Kannauj
Basantan	850	Od Strung 841	Bigrahapala 845	Bhoj 836
Kharpar	870	Okharwa Chen	Narayan 857	
Adhidhaj	897		Mahendrapala 892	
Tribhuwanraj	895	Nui-Megon	Rajyapal 911	Mahipal 914
Nitarata	915			Mahendrapala 945
Ishtagana	930			Devpala 948
Lalit Sur	969			

(Contd.)

## (Appendix 2 Contd.)

Katyuri Kings	Period A.D.	Contemporary Kings		
		Tibet	Bengal	Kannauj
Bhudev	960	Kra-Shish-Sde	Four kings who had short-lived tenure	Vijrahapal 992
Salonaditya	980	Okhor Sde	Mahipal	
Ichhata	1000		Rajyapal	
Deshata	1015	Strong Sde	1018	
Padmatava	1030			Trilochan
Subhikshe	1014			1027

## CHRONOLOGY OF PANWAR AND CHAND DYNASTY OF GARHWAL-KUMAON

Name of the king Panwar	Chand	Remarks
	Name of the king	
1	2	3
Kanakpal	Soma Chand	A.D.
Shyampal	Atma ,,	757
Pandupal	Purna ,,	778
Abhiligtpal	Indra ,,	797
Seegatpal	Sansar ,,	815
Rathnapal	Sudha ,,	835
Sualibaban	Hammira ,,	870
Bhaktipal	Bina ,,	890
		913—926
Madanpal		Khasiyas wrested power and ruled
Jaichandrapal		over Kumaon from 916-1122
Prithivipal		
	Bira Chand	1122
	Rupa Chand	1137

(Contd.)

## (Appendix 2 Contd.)

Panwar 1	Name of the king 2	Chand		Remarks 3
		Name of the king	Chand	
Madanpal II	Lachchni Chand	1150		
Agasipal	Dharma	"	1170	
Suralipal	Karma	"	1178	
Jayatpal	Kalyan	"	1197	
Satya (Anantpal)	Nirbhaya	"	1206	
Anandpal	Nara	"	1227	
Bibhogpal	Nanki	"	1234	
Subhyan	Rama	"	1252	
Vikrampal	Bhikma	"	1262	
Vichitrapal	Megha	"	1283	
Hanspal	Dhyana	"	1290	
Sonpal	Parbata	"	1309	
Kantipal	Tohar	"	1318	
Kamdev	Kalyan	"	1332	
Sulaxampal	Triloki	"	1353	
Sudaxan	Damara	"	1378	
Anantpal	Abhaya	"	1401	
Purvadiypala	Garur Gyan "		1431	

Abhaipal	1476	Harihar	"	Ratna	"	1518
Jairampala	1477	Udhyan	"	Kirati	"	1545
Ashalpal	1478	Atma	"	Partap	"	1560
Jagatpal	1479	Hari	"	Tara	"	1574
Anandpal	1480	Vikrama	"	Manik	"	1590
Ajaipal (1500-19)		Bharati	"	Kali Kalyan		1599
				Puni Puran	"	1608
				Bhikma	"	1612
Kalyan Shah (1519-29)		Balbhadra Shah (1575-91)		Babo Kalyan	"	1617
Sundarpal (1529-39)		Man Shah (1591-1610)		Rudra	"	1685
Hansdevpal (1539-47)		Sahajpal (1555-75)		Laxmichand	"	1597
Vijaipal (1549-55)		Shyam Shah (1610-29)		Daleep	"	1621
Sahajpal I (1555-75)		Balbhadra Shah (1629-49)		Vijai	"	1624
Balbhadra Shah (1575-91)		Prithvipati Shah (1646-76)		Trimal	"	1625
Man Shah (1591-1610)		Medvi Shah (1976-99)		Raj Bahadur	"	1638
Shyam Shah (1610-29)		Fateh Shah (1699-1749)				
Mahipat Shah (1629-49)		Upendra Shah (1749-50)				
Prithvipati Shah (1646-76)		Pradeep Shah (1750-80)				
Medvi Shah (1976-99)		Lalit Shah (1780-91)				

(Contd.)

## (Appendix 2 Contd.)

Panwar Name of the king	Chand Name of the king		Remarks
	1	2	
Jaikrit Shah (1804-15)	Udyot	"	1678
Pradyumna Shah (1797-1804)	Gyan	"	1698
Sudarshan Shah (1815-59)	Jagat	"	1708
Bhawani Shah (1859-71)	Devi	"	1720
Pratap Shah (1871-86)	Kalyan Chand II		1729
Kirti Shah (1886-1913)	Deep	Chand	1748
Narendra Shah (1913-50)	Mohan	"	1777
Manvendra Shah—1950	Pradyumna Shah (Chand)		1797 He ruled over Kumaon also.
	Mohan Chand		1798-99
	Shiv Chand		1800
	Mohan Chand		He was the last king.

**APPENDIX 3**  
**HOLY PLACES IN UTTARAKHAND**

Name of Place	Height	Distance from Rishikesh
Yamunotri	11000 ft.	253 km.
Gangotri	10300 ft.	260 ,
Kenarnath	11750 ft.	227 ,
Badrinath	10200 ft.	301 ,
Kashis—		
Uttarkashi	3800 ft.	154 ,
Guptkashi	6300 ft.	174 ,
Five Prayags—		
Deoprayag	1600 ft.	71 ,
Rudraprayag	2000 ft.	142 ,
Karanprayag	3000 ft.	174 ,
Nandprayag	3800 ft.	194 ,
Vishnuprayag	4000 ft.	268 ,
Five Kedars—		
Kedarnath	11750 ft.	227 ,
Tungnath	12700 ft.	199 , on foot from Chopta.

(Contd.)

## (Appendix 3 Contd.)

<i>Name of Place</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Distance from Rishikesh</i>
Madmaheshwar	14000 ft.	207 , 34 km on foot from Okhini-
Rudranath	13000 ft.	256 , math via Okhini 19 km.
Kalpeshwar	8000 ft.	251 , on foot. 16 km on foot from Helong.
<i>Five Badris—</i>		
Badrinath	10300 ft.	260 ,
Adi Badri	3800 ft.	193 ,
Bhawishiya Badri	8000 ft.	280 ,
Dhayan Badri	7000 ft.	246 ,
Bura Badri	5000 ft.	250 ,

**APPENDIX 4**  
**AN INDEX TO IMPORTANT HEIGHTS AND DISTANCES FROM RISHIKESH**

Starting Point.	Type of Transport	Destination	Height ft.	Distance km.	Facilities for Stay	Remarks
<i>Rishikesh-Yamunotri Route</i>						
Rishikesh	G.M.O.U. Bus/Car/ Taxis are available	Barakote	5000	167	Forest Rest House Tourist Rest House Tourist/PWD Rest House	
Sayanachatti		Sayanachatti	6150	213	PWD/Tourist Dharamshala Tourist Rest House.	Yatris halt and visit Yamunotri from here and come back.
Sayanachatti	On foot	Beef	8000	229		
		Yamunotri	11000	233		
<i>Rishikesh-Uttarkashi-Lanka-Gangotri-Gaumukh Route</i>						
Rishikesh	As above	Narendranagar	3000	16	PWD/Forest Rest House	Distt. H.Q.
		Chamba	4500	61	,	Presents pano- ramic view of Bandarpooch Dam site at Tehri.
						(Contd.)

## (Appendix 4 Contd.)

<i>Starting Point.</i>	<i>Type of Transport</i>	<i>Destination</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Distance</i>	<i>Facilities for Stay</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Lanka	On foot	Tehri	3000	82	PWD/Inspn. House	Distt. H.Q.
		Uttarkashi	3800	154	PWD/Forest/ Tourist House	
		Manei	4000	160	Irrigation Rest House	Dam site
		Bhatwari	6000	183	PWD	Deodar Forest
		Harsil	8400	227	Forest/PWD	Last Bus Stand
		Lanka	9300	248	PWD	Temple
		Gangotri	10300	260	PWD/Tourist/ Forest Dharamshala	
		Gumukh	13000	277	Source of Bhagirathi	
		"				
	Rishikesh	Deoprayag	1600	71	PWD/Dharamshala	Alaknanda meets Bhagirathi
	GMOU Bus/Car/ Taxis are available		Srinagar	1650	PWD/Forest/Tourist	Old township
	Rudraprayag	2000	142	,"	Mandakini meets Alaknanda	
	Guptkashi	4300	182	,"	Temple	
	Soneprayag	5700	209	Tourist Forest/PWD	Last Bus stand	
	Gaurikund	7000	214	temple	Resting place	
	Soneprayag	Kedarnath	11800	227	,"	Temple

*Rishikesh-Kedarnath Route :*

Rishikesh      GMOU Bus/Car/  
Taxis are available

Soneprayag      On foot; Now vehicles also go

*Rishikesh Badrinath Route :*

Rishikesh      GMOU Bus/Car/  
Taxis are available.

Rishikesh	GMOU Bus/Car/ Taxis are available.	Deoprayag	1600	71	PWD/Forest/Tourist rest house are available everywhere	Alaknanda meets Bhagirathi
		Srinagar	1650	108	and can be booked in advance.	Old tow ship.
		Rudraprayag	2000	142		Mandakini meets Alaknanda Route for Kedarnath bifurcates
		Karanprayag	3000	174	"	Pind r meets Alaknanda Route from Almora
		Nandprayag Chamoli	3800 4000	194 204	"	Kausani merges here.
—do—		Pipalkoti Joshimath	4400 6100	422 257	"	Route for Distt. H.Q, at Gopesh- war bifurcates.
						Old town
						Old township

(Contd.)

## (Appendix 4 Contd.)

Starting Point.	Type of Transport	Destination	Height	Distance	Facilities for Stay	Remarks
					Rest Houses are available everywhere Badrinath and can be booked in advance.	
Pandukeshwar	6000	279	"	"	Old temples	Old temple of Trident of Malla
Badrinath	10200	301	"	"	Holy Dham	Route for Anusuya bifurcates
Chamoli	Bus/Car/Taxi	Gopeshwar	5000	8	Distt. H.Q.	Way to Tungnath (13000)
Mandal			5500	20	PWD/I.H.	Old temple
Chopta			8000	60	Forest Rest House	This road merges into Rudra-prayag-Sone-prayag route.
Okhimath	5000	75			Forest/PWD	
Kund	3000	85				
Chopta	On foot	Tungnath	13000	5		

*Chamoli-Gopeshwar-Kedarnath Route :*

*Rishikesh-Hemkund-Valley of Flowers :*

Rishikesh	As above	Joshimath	6100	257	Forest/PWD/Tourist Trade Centre
		Govindghat	4500	268	Gurudwara
Govindghat	On foot	Ghagaria	9000	274	Forest/Tourist Forest
"	"	Hemkund	14000	280	Thick Deodar
"	"	Valley of	12500	279	Beautiful lake
		Flowers.	"	"	

*Kotedwar-Badrinath Route :*

Kotedwar	Bus/Taxi	Pauri	6200	82	Distt. H.Q. All facilities.
	"	Srinagar	1650	112	Old town
	"				From here it merges with the Rishikesh-Badrinath route.

*Kathgodam-Nainital-Ranikhet-Almora :*

Kathgodam	All types of transport available.	Nainital	6000	35	Distt. H.Q.
		Ranikhet	5000	60	Hotels, PWD Forest Rest Houses.
		Almora	5000	70	Distr. H.Q. Old township which has every thing to offer.

(Contd.)

## (Appendix 4 Contd.)

Starting Point.	Type of Transport	Destination	Height	Distance	Facilities for Stay	Remarks
Kathgodam	Bus/jeep/taxi	Bageshwari	3200	177	PWD/Forest Rest House are available all though the route.	Saryu and Gomti meet here. Old Baijnath temple
Kapkot	On foot	Kapkot Pindari	3750 11000	210 280		Magnificent view of Glacier.
Tanakpur	All type of transport available	Champawat Lohaghat Pithoragarh Askote Dharchula Tawaghat Narayan-Ashram	5000 5200 4800 5000 3600 3800 11000	40 50 50 30 66 76 13		

*Kathgodam-Bageshwari-Pindari Glaciar :*

Pithoragarh	5200	223	Distt. H.Q.
Kapkot	3750	210	
Pindari	11000	280	

*Tanakpur-Champawat-Lohaghat-Pithoragarh-Askote-Dharchula :*

Tanakpur	All type of transport available	Champawat Lohaghat Pithoragarh Askote Dharchula Tawaghat Narayan-Ashram
Tawaghat	On foot	

*Other Important Routes :*

Karanprayag	Bus/Car/Taxi	Gwaldam	6000	66	Forest/PWD rest house	Presents magnificent view of Trisul group of peaks.	
Bajinath Kausani		3696 6200	106 124	" "	Old temple site.	Magnificent view of Himalayas	
Simli Adi-Badri		3800 4000	10 19	" PWD Rest House	Old temples.	Old temples.	
Gairsen		5000	76	"	Badrinath Hill Station type location	Hill Station	
Dwarahat		3900	114	Forest/PWD All kinds of facilities.	Old temples.	Old temples.	
Ranikhet		5000	146	All kinds of facilities.	Hill Station with view of Himalayas	Hill Station with view of Himalayas	
Almora	All types of transport. But gate system exists.	Jageshwar	5500	27	Forest Rest House.	Old temples and seat of Jyotirlinga.	—
		Dhaul-a-Devi Ghat	6000 3000	45 67	—	—	

(Contd.)

## (Appendix 4 Contd.)

<i>Starting Point.</i>	<i>Type of Transport</i>	<i>Destination</i>	<i>Height Distance</i>	<i>Facilities for Stay</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Pithoragarh	All types of transport	Pithoragarh Thal	5000 3500	110 50	Distt. H.Q. Forest/PWD
On foot	"	Munsiyari Millam	6200 11400	40 60	PWD "
Almora	Bus	Binsar	7913	21	PWD/Forest View of Himalayas-

**APPENDIX 5****Some Important Distances (in km)**

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Kedarnath to Badrinath	...	244
Yamunotri to Gangotri	...	241
Gangotri to Kedarnath	...	352
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Gangotri to Badrinath	...	429
Yamunotri to Badrinath	...	399

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